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# 26 MYSTERY STORIES

OLD AND NEW

BY TWENTY AND SIX AUTHORS

EDITED BY ERNEST RHYS AND C.A. DAWSON-SCOTT

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❧ OLD AND NEW ❧

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ERNEST RHYS AND C. A. DAWSON-SCOTT

26 MYSTERY STORIES: OLD AND NEW.

BY TWENTY AND SIX AUTHORS.

28 HUMOROUS STORIES: OLD AND NEW.

BY TWENTY AND EIGHT AUTHORS.

29 LOVE STORIES: OLD AND NEW.

BY TWENTY AND NINE AUTHORS.

23 STORIES. BY TWENTY AND THREE AUTHORS.

31 STORIES. BY THIRTY AND ONE AUTHORS.

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EDITED BY  
ERNEST RHYS  
AND  
C. A. DAWSON-SCOTT



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## FOREWORD

All stories of the human heart and mind are in some degree tales of mystery. In time no doubt every mood and experience will be analysed and related to all others, and in that day the supernatural will be seen to be natural.

"Mortal man may not go soaring to the heavens," said Alcman, "nor seek to wed the Queen of the Air, or some silver-shining daughter of Nereus of the Sea." But it is in the heart of every man and woman to break the earthen walls, scale the heavens and penetrate the mystery. Therefore tales of that spiritual adventure will always hold us by their imaginative dispensing with sensual reality.

"I have been," said Newton at the end of his life, "a child picking up pebbles on the shore of the ocean," and we, too, stumble among the difficulties of the way; nor have we yet found a satisfactory answer to the question, "Has the human being spiritual senses equivalent to his physical senses of hearing, seeing, apprehending?"

It has been our experience that the so-called supernatural is not alarming to the individual who experiences it; that people do not drop dead, or faint with apprehension, or indeed feel in any way greatly disturbed when they receive a spiritual manifestation. They may think they will be afraid if such a thing should happen to them, but when it comes they accept it in the spirit of the man in Zona Gale's "The Voice." These stories have been selected with an eye to that fact, and we have sought to give as many facets of the diamond as possible, grouping similar experiences together, and showing that an old tale

such as "Grace Connor" can be told as simply as Professor Sayce's little "Reminiscence" or Rebecca West's "Gray Men."

Spiritual fantasy such as Arthur Machen's "Child's Story" has the core of a mystery which transcends the knowledge we have at present attained. Another range of supernatural intelligence is marked for us with absolute fidelity, in the two Breton tales collected by Anatole le Braz, Daniel Defoe's account of "The Apparition of Mrs. Veal," and the grim war story "His Mother's Eyes." In each case the episode or story chosen, has been so chosen, not so much for artistic effect as for ghostly or mysterious verisimilitude; yet it will be found that as pieces of tale-telling, of the tale-teller's craft, these are little master-pieces of their kind.

They follow up the idea that this series of short story volumes was designed to represent all sides of the art by selecting writers old and new who, whatever else they did or did not achieve, knew at any rate how *to tell a story*.

E. R.  
C. A. D. S.

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26 MYSTERY STORIES  
✿ OLD AND NEW ✿



# 26 MYSTERY STORIES OLD AND NEW

## BEWITCHED

By EDITH WHARTON

### I

THE snow was still falling thickly when Orrin Bosworth, who farmed the land south of Lonetop, drove up in his cutter to Saul Rutledge's gate. He was surprised to see two other cutters ahead of him. From them descended two muffled figures. Bosworth, with increasing surprise, recognized Deacon Hibben, from North Ashmore, and Sylvester Brand, the widower, from the old Bearcliff Farm.

It was not often that anybody in Hemlock County entered Saul Rutledge's gate; least of all in the dead of winter, and summoned (as Bosworth, at any rate, had been) by Mrs. Rutledge, who passed, even in that unsocial region, for a woman of cold manners and solitary character.

"Hallo, Deacon."

"Well, well, Orrin—" They shook hands.

"'Day, Bosworth," said Sylvester Brand with a brief nod, and they walked across to the front door. The Deacon had hardly lifted the knocker, when the door opened and Mrs. Rutledge stood before them.

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From *Here and Beyond*, by Edith Wharton, copyright, 1926, by D. Appleton and Company.

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"Walk right in," she said in her usual dead-level tone. She was dressed for the occasion in a black calico with white spots, a collar of crochet lace fastened by a gold brooch, and a grey woollen shawl, crossed under her arms and tied at the back. In her small narrow head the only marked prominence was that of the brow projecting roundly over pale spectacled eyes. Her eyes were of a cold grey, her complexion was an even white. Her age might have been anywhere from thirty-five to sixty.

The room into which she led the three men was at once close and bitterly cold.

"Andy Pond," Mrs. Rutledge cried to some one at the back of the house, "step out and call Mr. Rutledge. You'll likely find him in the wood-shed, or round the barn somewheres." She rejoined her visitors. "I presume you folks are wondering what I asked you to come here for," she said, "and I'll allow you didn't expect it was for a party."

No one ventured to respond to this chill pleasantry, and she continued: "We're in trouble here and need advice—Mr. Rutledge and myself do." She cleared her throat, and added in a lower tone, her pitilessly clear eyes looking straight before her. "There's a spell been cast over Mr. Rutledge."

The Deacon looked up sharply, an incredulous smile pinching his thin lips. "A spell?"

"That's what I said: he's bewitched."

Bosworth, less tongue-tied than the others, asked with an attempt at humour: "Do you use the word in the strict Scripture sense, Mrs. Rutledge?"

"That's how *he* uses it."

The Deacon coughed and cleared his long, rattling throat. "Do you care to give us more particulars before your husband joins us?"

Mrs. Rutledge looked down at her clasped hands, as if



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considering the question. "No," she said at length, "I'll wait."

A silence fell, during which the four persons present seemed all to be listening for the sound of a step; but none was heard, and after a minute, Mrs. Rutledge began to speak again.

"It's down by that old shack on Lamer's pond; that's where they meet." Bosworth, whose eyes were on Sylvester Brand's face, fancied he saw a sort of inner flush darken the farmer's heavy leathern skin. Deacon Hibben leaned forward, a glitter of curiosity in his eyes.

"They—*who*, Mrs. Rutledge?"

"My husband, Saul Rutledge . . . and her. . . ."

Sylvester Brand stirred in his seat. "Who do you mean by *her*?" he asked abruptly.

Mrs. Rutledge's body did not move; she simply revolved her head on her long neck and looked at him.

"Your daughter, Sylvester Brand."

The man staggered to his feet with an explosion of inarticulate sound. "My—my daughter? What the hell are you talking about? My daughter? It's a damned lie . . . it's . . . it's. . . ."

"Your daughter *Ora*, Mr. Brand," said Mrs. Rutledge slowly.

Bosworth felt an icy chill down his spine. Instinctively he turned his eyes away from Brand, and they rested on the mildewed countenance of Deacon Hibben. Between the blotches it had become white as Mrs. Rutledge's, and the Deacon's eyes burned in the whiteness like live embers among ashes.

Brand gave a laugh: the rusty creaking laugh of one whose springs of mirth are never moved by gaiety. "My daughter *Ora*?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"My *dead* daughter?"

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"That's what he says."

"Your husband?"

"That's what Mr. Rutledge says."

Brand rose to his feet. "Is that all?" he queried contemptuously.

"All? Ain't it enough? How long is it since you folks seen Saul Rutledge, any of you?" Mrs. Rutledge flew out at them.

Bosworth, it appeared, had not seen him for nearly a year; the Deacon had only run across him once, for a minute, at the North Ashmore post office, the previous autumn, and acknowledged he wasn't looking any too good, then. Brand said nothing but stood irresolute.

"Well, if you wait a minute you'll see with your own eyes; and he'll tell you with his own words. That's what I've got you here for—to see for yourselves what's come over him. Then you'll talk different," she added, twisting her head abruptly towards Sylvester Brand.

The Deacon raised a lean hand of interrogation. "Does your husband know we've been sent for on this business, Mrs. Rutledge?"

Mrs. Rutledge signed assent.

"It was with his consent, then—"

She looked coldly at her questioner. "I guess it had to be," she said. Again Bosworth felt a chill run down his spine. He tried to dissipate the sensation by speaking with an affectation of energy.

"Can you tell us, Mrs. Rutledge, how this trouble you speak of shows itself . . . what makes you think . . . ?"

She looked at him for a moment; then she leaned forward across the rickety bead-work table. A thin smile of disdain narrowed her colourless lips. "I don't think—I know."

"Well—but how?"

## BEWITCHED

She leaned closer, both elbows on the table, her voice dropping. "I seen 'em."

In the ashen light from the veiling of snow beyond the windows the Deacon's little screwed-up eyes seemed to give out red sparks. "Him and the dead?"

"Him and the dead."

"Saul Rutledge and—and Ora Brand?"

"That's so."

Sylvester Brand's chair fell backward with a crash. He was on his feet again, crimson and cursing. "It's a God-damned fiend-begotten lie. . . ."

"Friend Brand . . . friend Brand . . ." the Deacon protested.

"Here, let me get out of this. I want to see Saul Rutledge himself, and tell him—"

"Well, here he is," said Mrs. Rutledge.

The outer door had opened; they heard the familiar stamping and shaking of a man who rids his garments of their last snowflake before penetrating to the sacred precincts of the best parlour. Then Saul Rutledge entered.

## II

As he came in he faced the light from the north window, and Bosworth's first thought was that he looked like a drowned man fished out from under the ice—"self-drowned," he added. But the snow-light plays cruel tricks with a man's colour, and even with the shape of his features; it must have been partly that, Bosworth reflected, which transformed Saul Rutledge from the straight, muscular fellow he had been a year before into the haggard wretch now before them.

The Deacon sought for a word to ease the horror. "Well, now, Saul—you look's if you'd ought to set right up to the stove. Had a touch of ague, maybe?"

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The feeble attempt was unavailing. Rutledge neither moved nor answered. He stood among them silent, incommunicable, like one risen from the dead.

Brand grasped him roughly by the shoulder. "See here, Saul Rutledge, what's this dirty lie your wife tells us you've been putting about?"

Still Rutledge did not move. "It's no lie," he said.

Brand's hand dropped from his shoulder. In spite of the man's rough bullying power he seemed to be undefinably awed by Rutledge's look and tone.

"No lie? You've gone plumb crazy, then, have you?"

Mrs. Rutledge spoke. "My husband's not lying, nor he ain't gone crazy. Don't I tell you I seen 'em?"

Brand laughed. "Him and the dead?"

"Yes."

"Down by the Lamer pond, you say?"

"Yes."

"And when was that, if I might ask?"

"Day before yesterday."

A silence fell on the strangely assembled group. The Deacon at length broke it to say to Mr. Brand: "Brand, in my opinion we've got to see this thing through."

Brand stood for a moment in speechless contemplation, then let himself slowly down into his chair. "I'll see it through."

The two other men and Mrs. Rutledge had remained seated. Saul Rutledge stood before them, like a prisoner at the bar, or rather like a sick man before the physicians who were to heal him. As Bosworth scrutinized that hollow face, so wan under the dark sunburn, so sucked inward and consumed by some hidden fever, there stole over the sound healthy man the thought that perhaps, after all, husband and wife spoke the truth, and that they were all at that moment really standing on the edge of some forbidden mystery. Things that the rational



## BEWITCHED

mind would reject without a thought seemed no longer so easy to dispose of as one looked at the actual Saul Rutledge and remembered the man he had been a year before. Yes; as the Deacon said, they would have to see it through. . . .

"Sit down then, Saul; draw up to us, won't you?" the Deacon suggested, trying again for a natural tone.

Mrs. Rutledge pushed a chair forward and her husband sat down on it. He stretched out his arms and grasped his knees in his brown bony fingers; in that attitude he remained, turning neither his head nor his eyes.

"Well, Saul," the Deacon continued, "your wife says you thought mebbe we could do something to help you through this trouble, whatever it is."

Rutledge's grey eyes widened a little. "No; I didn't think that. It was her idea to try what could be done."

"I presume, though, since you've agreed to our coming, that you don't object to our putting a few questions?"

Rutledge was silent for a moment; then he said with a visible effort:

"No, I don't object."

"Well—you've heard what your wife says?"

Rutledge made a slight motion of assent.

"And—what have you got to answer? How do you explain . . . ?"

Mrs. Rutledge intervened. "How can he explain? I seen 'em."

There was a silence; then Bosworth, trying to speak in an easy reassuring tone, queried: "That so, Saul?"

"That's so."

Brand lifted up his brooding head. "You mean to say you . . . you sit here before me and say . . ."

The Deacon's hand checked him. "Hold on, friend Brand. We're all of us trying for the facts, ain't we?"

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He turned to Rutledge. "We've heard what Mrs. Rutledge says. What's your answer?"

"I don't know as there's any answer. She found us."

"And you mean to tell me the person with you was . . . was what you took to be . . ." the Deacon's thin voice grew thinner: "Ora Brand?"

Saul Rutledge nodded.

"You knew . . . or thought you knew . . . you were meeting with the dead?"

Rutledge bent his head again. The snow continued to fall in a steady unwavering sheet against the window, and Bosworth felt as if a winding-sheet were descending from the window to envelope them all in a common grave.

"Think what you're saying! It's against our religion! Ora . . . poor child . . . died a year ago. I saw you at her funeral, Saul. How can you make such a statement?"

"What else can he do?" thrust in Mrs. Rutledge.

There was another pause. The Deacon laid his quivering finger-tips together and moistened his lips.

"Was the day before yesterday the first time?" he asked.

The movement of Rutledge's head was negative.

"Not the first? Then when . . ."

"Nigh on a year ago, I reckon."

"God! And you mean to tell us that ever since—?"

"Well . . . look at him," said his wife. The three men lowered their eyes.

After a moment Bosworth, trying to collect himself, glanced at the Deacon. "Why not ask Saul to make his own statement, if that is what we are here for?"

"That's so," the Deacon assented. He turned to Rutledge. "Will you try to give us your idea of . . . of how it began?"

Rutledge tightened his grasp on his gaunt knees.

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"Well," he said, "I guess it begun way back, afore even I was married to Mrs. Rutledge . . ." He spoke in a low automatic voice, as if some invisible agent were dictating his words, or even uttering them for him. "You know," he added, "Ora and me, we kept company. But she was very young. Mr. Brand here he sent her away. She was gone nigh to three years, I guess. When she come back I was married."

"That's right," Brand said.

"And after she came back did you meet her again?" the Deacon continued.

"Alive?" Rutledge questioned.

"Well—of course," said the Deacon nervously.

Rutledge seemed to consider. "Once I did—only once. There was a lot of other people round. At Cold Corners fair it was."

"Did you talk with her then?"

"Only a minute."

"What did she say?"

His voice dropped. "She said she was sick and knew she was going to die, and when she was dead she'd come back to me."

"And what did you answer?"

"Nothing."

"Did you think anything of it at the time?"

"Well, no. Not till I heard she was dead I didn't. After that I thought of it—and I guess she drew me." He moistened his lips.

"Drew you down to that abandoned house by the pond?"

Rutledge made a faint motion of assent, and the Deacon added: "How . . . did you know it was there she wanted you to come?"

"She . . . just drew me . . ."

There was a long pause. Mrs. Rutledge opened and

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closed her narrow lips like some beached shell-fish gasping for the tide. Rutledge waited.

"Well, now, Saul, won't you go on with what you was telling us?" the Deacon suggested.

"That's all. There's nothing else."

The Deacon lowered his voice. "She just draws you?"

"Yes."

"Often?"

"That's as it happens . . ."

"But if it's always there she draws you, man, haven't you the strength to keep away from the place?"

For the first time Rutledge wearily turned his head toward his questioner. A spectral smile narrowed his colourless lips. "Ain't any use. She follers after me . . ."

Mrs. Rutledge's presence checked the next question. At length the Deacon spoke in a more authoritative tone. "These are forbidden things. You know that, Saul. Have you tried prayer?"

Rutledge shook his head.

"Will you pray with us now?"

Rutledge cast a glance of freezing indifference on his spiritual adviser. "If you folks want to pray, I'm agreeable," he said. But Mrs. Rutledge intervened.

"Prayer ain't any good. In this kind of thing it ain't no manner of use; you know it ain't. I called you here, Deacon, because you remember the last case in this parish. Thirty years ago it was, I guess; but you remember. Lefferts Nash—did praying help *him*? I was a little girl then, but I used to hear my folks talk of it winter nights. Lefferts Nash and Hannah Cory. They drove a stake through her breast. That's what cured him."

Sylvester Brand raised his head. "You're speaking of that old story as if this was the same sort of thing?"

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"Ain't it? Ain't my husband pining away the same as Lefferts Nash did? The Deacon here knows—"

The Deacon stirred anxiously in his chair. "These are forbidden things," he repeated. "Supposing your husband is quite sincere in thinking himself haunted, as you might say. Well, even then, what proof have we that the . . . the dead woman . . . is the spectre of that poor girl?"

"Proof? Don't he say so? Didn't she tell him? Ain't I seen 'em?" Mrs. Rutledge almost screamed.

The three men sat silent, and suddenly the wife burst out: "A stake through the breast! That's the old way; and it's the only way. The Deacon knows it."

"It's against our religion to disturb the dead."

"Ain't it against your religion to let the living perish as my husband is perishing?" She sprang up with one of her abrupt movements and took the family Bible from the what-not in a corner of the parlour. Putting the book on the table, and moistening a livid finger-tip, she turned the pages rapidly, till she came to one on which she laid her hand like a stony paper-weight. "See here," she said, and read out in her level chanting voice:

*"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."*

"That's in Exodus, that's where it is," she added, leaving the book open as if to confirm the statement.

The three visitors remained silent, turning about their hats in reluctant hands. Rutledge faced them, still with that empty pellucid gaze which frightened Bosworth. What was he seeing?

"Ain't any of you folks got the grit—" his wife burst out again, half hysterically.

Deacon Hibben held up his hand. "That's no way, Mrs. Rutledge. This ain't a question of having grit. What we want first of all is . . . proof. . . ."

"That's so," said Bosworth, with an explosion of relief,



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as if the words had lifted something black and crouching from his breast. Involuntarily the eyes of both men had turned to Brand. He stood there, smiling grimly, but did not speak.

"Ain't it so, Brand?" the Deacon prompted him.

"Proof that spooks walk?" the other sneered.

"Well—I presume you want this business settled too?"

The old farmer squared his shoulders. "Yes—I do. But I ain't a sperritualist. How the hell are you going to settle it?"

Deacon Hibben hesitated; then he said, in a low incisive tone: "I don't see but one way—Mrs. Rutledge's."

There was a silence.

"What?" Brand sneered again. "Spying?"

The Deacon's voice sank lower. "If the poor girl *does* walk . . . her that's your child . . . wouldn't you be the first to want her laid quiet? We all know there've been such cases . . . mysterious visitations . . . Can any one of us here deny it?"

"I've seen 'em," Mrs. Rutledge interjected.

Suddenly Brand fixed his gaze on Rutledge. "See here, Saul Rutledge, you've got to clear up this damned calumny, or I'll know why. You say my dead girl comes to you." He laboured with his breath, and then jerked out: "When? You tell me that and I'll be there."

Rutledge's head drooped a little, and his eyes wandered to the window. "Round about sunset mostly."

"You'll know beforehand?"

Rutledge made a sign of assent.

"Well, then—tomorrow, will it be?"

Rutledge made the same sign.

Brand turned to the door. "I'll be there." He strode out between them without another glance or word. Deacon Hibben looked at Mrs. Rutledge. "We'll be there, too," he said, as if she had asked him, but she had not



## BEWITCHED

spoken, and Bosworth saw that her thin body was trembling all over. He was glad when he and Hibben were out again in the snow.

### III

They thought that Brand wanted to be left to himself, but he turned back to them as they lingered. "You'll meet me down by Lamer's pond tomorrow," he suggested. "I want witnesses. Round about sunset."

They nodded their acquiescence and he drove off under the snow-smothered hemlocks.

"What do you make of this business, Deacon?" Bosworth asked.

The Deacon shook his head. "The man's a sick man—that's sure. Something's sucking the life clean out of him."

But already, in the biting outer air, Bosworth was getting himself under better control. "Looks to me like a bad case of the ague, as you said."

"Well—ague of the mind, then. It's his brain that's sick."

Bosworth shrugged. "He ain't the first in Hemlock County."

"That's so," the Deacon agreed. "It's a worm in the brain, solitude is."

"Well, we'll know this time tomorrow, maybe," said Bosworth. He scrambled into his sleigh, and was driving off when he heard his companion calling after him. The Deacon explained that his horse had cast a shoe; would Bosworth drive him down to the forge near North Ashmore, if it wasn't too much out of his way? He didn't want the mare slipping about on the freezing snow, and he could probably get the blacksmith to drive him back and shoe her in Rutledge's shed. Bosworth made room

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for him under the bearskin, and the two men drove off pursued by a puzzled whinny from the Deacon's old mare.

The shortest way to the forge passed close by Lamer's pond, and Bosworth, since he was in for the business, was not sorry to look the ground over. They jogged along slowly, each thinking his own thoughts.

"That's the house . . . that tumble-down shack over there, I suppose?" the Deacon said, as the road drew near the edge of the frozen pond.

Bosworth reined in his horse and looked through pine-trees purpled by the sunset at the crumbling structure. Between two sharply-patterned pine-boughs he saw the evening star, like a white boat in a sea of green.

His gaze dropped from that fathomless sky and followed the blue-white undulations of the snow. It gave him a curious agitated feeling to think that here, in this icy solitude, in the tumble-down house he had so often passed without heeding it, a dark mystery, too deep for thought, was being enacted. Down that very slope, coming from the graveyard at Cold Corners, the being they called "Ora" must pass toward the pond. His heart began to beat stiflingly. Suddenly he gave an exclamation: "Look!"

He had jumped out of the cutter and was stumbling up the bank toward the slope of snow. On it, turned in the direction of the house by the pond, he had detected a woman's footprints; two; then three; then more. The Deacon scrambled out after him and they stood and stared.

"God—barefoot!" Hibben gasped. "Then it is . . . the dead. . . ."

Bosworth said nothing. But he knew that no live woman would travel with naked feet across that freezing wilderness. Here, then, was the proof the Deacon had asked for—they held it. What should they do with it?

## BEWITCHED

"Supposing we was to drive up nearer—round the turn of the pond, till we get close to the house," the Deacon proposed in a colourless voice. "Mebbe then . . ."

Postponement was a relief. They got into the sleigh and drove on. Two or three hundred yards farther the road turned sharply to the right following the bend of the pond. As they rounded the turn they saw Brand's cutter ahead of them. It was empty, the horse tied to a tree-trunk. The two men looked at each other again. This was not Brand's nearest way home.

Evidently he had been actuated by the same impulse which had made them rein in their horse by the pond-side, and then hasten on to the deserted house. Bosworth found himself shivering under his bearskin. "I wish to God the dark wasn't coming on," he muttered. He tethered his horse near Brand's, and he and the Deacon ploughed through the snow, in the track of Brand's huge feet.

They had only a few yards to walk to overtake him. He did not hear them following him, and when Bosworth spoke his name he stopped and turned, his heavy face dim and confused, like a darker blot on the dusk. He looked at them dully, but without surprise.

"I wanted to see the place," he said.

The three men came out together in the cleared space before the house. As they emerged from beneath the trees they seemed to have left night behind. The evening star shed a lustre on the speckless snow, and Brand, in the lucid circle, stopped with a jerk, and pointed to the same light footprints turned towards the house—the track of a woman in the snow. He stood still, his face working. "Bare feet . . ." he said.

The Deacon piped up in a quavering voice. "The feet of the dead."

Brand remained motionless. "The feet of the dead," he echoed.

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Deacon Hibben laid a frightened hand on his arm. "Come away now, Brand; for the love of God come away."

The father hung there, gazing down at those light tracks in the snow—light as fox or squirrel trails they seemed, on the white immensity. Bosworth thought to himself: "The living couldn't walk so light—not even Ora Brand couldn't have, when she lived. . . ."

Brand swung about on them abruptly. "*Now!*" he said, moving on as if to an assault, his head bowed forward on his bull neck.

"Now—now? Not in there?" gasped the Deacon. "What's the use? It was tomorrow he said—" He shook like a leaf.

"It's now," said Brand. He went up to the door of the crazy house, pushed it inward, and meeting with an unexpected resistance, thrust his heavy shoulder against the panel. The door collapsed like a playing card, and Brand stumbled after it into the darkness of the hut. The others, after a moment's hesitation, followed.

Bosworth was never quite sure in what order the events that succeeded took place. Coming in out of the snow-dazzle, he seemed to be plunging into total darkness. He groped his way across the threshold, caught a sharp splinter of the fallen door in his palm, seemed to see something white and wraith-like surge up out of the darkest corner of the hut, and then heard a revolver shot at his elbow, and a cry—

Brand had turned back, and was staggering past him out into the lingering daylight. The sunset, suddenly flushing through the trees, crimsoned his face like blood. He held a revolver in his hand, and looked about him in his stupid way.

"They *do* walk then," he said and began to laugh. He bent his head to examine his weapon. "Better here than

## BEWITCHED

in the churchyard. They shan't dig her up *now*," he shouted out. The two men caught him by the arms, and Bosworth got the revolver away from him.

### IV

The next day Bosworth's sister Loretta, who kept house for him, asked him, when he came in for his midday dinner, if he had heard the news.

"What news?"

"Venny Brand's down sick with pneumonia. The Deacon's been there. I guess she's dying." After a pause she added: "It'll kill Sylvester Brand, all alone up there."

Venny Brand was buried three days later. The Deacon read the service, Bosworth was one of the pall-bearers. The whole countryside turned out for Venny Brand was young and handsome, and her dying like that, so suddenly, had the fascination of tragedy. As pall-bearer, Bosworth felt obliged to linger and say a word to the stricken father. He waited till Brand had turned from the grave with the Deacon at his side. The three men stood together for a moment; but not one of them spoke. Brand's face was the closed door of a vault, barred with wrinkles like bands of iron. Finally the Deacon took his hand and said: "The Lord gave—"

Brand nodded and turned away toward the shed where the horses were hitched. Bosworth followed him. "Let me drive along home with you," he suggested.

Brand did not so much as turn his head. "Home? What home?" he said; and the other fell back.

Loretta Bosworth was talking with the other women while the men unblanketed their horses and backed the cutters out into the heavy snow. As Bosworth waited for her, a few feet off, he saw Mrs. Rutledge's tall bonnet lording it above the group.



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"Saul ain't here today, Mrs. Rutledge, is he?" one of the village elders piped, turning a benevolent old tortoise-head about on a loose neck, and blinking up into Mrs. Rutledge's marble face.

"No. Mr. Rutledge ain't here. He would 'a come for certain, but his aunt Minorca Cummins is being buried down to Stotesbury this very day and he had to go down there. Don't it sometimes seem zif we was all walking right in the Shadow of Death?"

As she moved towards the cutter in which the farm-hand was already seated, the Deacon went up to her with visible hesitation. Involuntarily Bosworth also moved nearer. He heard the Deacon say: "I'm glad to hear that Saul is able to be up and around."

She turned her small head on her rigid neck, and lifted the lids of marble.

"Yes, I guess he'll sleep quieter now. And *her* too, maybe, now she don't lay there alone any longer," she added in a low voice, with a sudden twist of her chin toward the fresh black stain in the graveyard snow.

# THE VICTIM

By MAY SINCLAIR

## I

STEVEN ACROYD, Mr. Greathead's chauffeur, was sulking in the garage.

Everybody was afraid of him. Everybody hated him except Mr. Greathead, his master, and Dorsy, his sweetheart.

And even Dorsy now, after yesterday!

Night had come. On one side the yard gates stood open to the black tunnel of the drive. On the other the high moor rose above the wall, immense, darker than the darkness. Steven's lantern in the open doorway of the garage and Dorsy's lamp in the kitchen window threw a blond twilight into the yard between. From where he sat, slantways on the step of the car, he could see, through the lighted window, the table with the lamp and Dorsy's sewing huddled up in a white heap as she left it just now, when she had jumped up and gone away. Because she was afraid of him.

She had gone straight to Mr. Greathead in his study, and Steven, sulking had flung himself out into the yard.

He stared into the window, thinking, thinking. Everybody hated him. He could tell by the damned spiteful way they looked at him in the bar of the "King's Arms"; kind of sideways and slink-eyed, turning their dirty tails and shuffling out of his way.

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## 26 MYSTERY STORIES

He had said to Dorsy he'd like to know what he'd done. He'd just dropped in for his glass as usual; he'd looked round and said "Good-evening," civil, and the dirty tykes took no more notice of him than if he'd been a toad. Mrs. Oldishaw, Dorsy's aunt, *she* hated him, boiled-ham-face, swelling with spite, shoving his glass at the end of her arm, without speaking, as if he'd been a bloody cockroach.

All because of the thrashing he'd given young Ned Oldishaw. If she didn't want the cub's neck broken she'd better keep him out of mischief. Young Ned knew what he'd get if he came meddling with *his* sweetheart.

It had happened yesterday afternoon, Sunday, when he had gone down with Dorsy to the "King's Arms" to see her aunt. They were sitting out on the wooden bench against the inn wall when young Ned began it. He could see him now with his arm round Dorsy's neck and his mouth gaping. And Dorsy laughing like a silly fool and the old woman snorting and shaking.

He could hear him, "She's my cousin if she *is* your sweetheart. You can't stop me kissing her." *Couldn't* he!

Why, what did they think? When he'd given up his good job at the Darlington Motor Works to come to East-thwaite and black Mr. Greathead's boots, chop wood, carry coal and water for him, and drive his shabby second-hand car. Not that he cared what he did so long as he could live in the same house with Dorsy Oldishaw. It wasn't likely he'd sit like a bloody Moses, looking on, while Ned—

To be sure, he had half killed him. He could feel Ned's neck swelling and rising up under the pressure of his hands, his fingers. He had struck him first, flinging him back against the inn wall, then he had pinned him—till the men ran up and dragged him off.

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And now they were all against him. Dorsy was against him. She had said she was afraid of him.

"Steven," she had said, "tha med 'a killed him."

"Well—p'raps next time he'll knaw better than to coom meddlin' with *my* lass."

"I'm not thy lass, ef tha canna keep thy hands off folks. I should be feared for my life of thee. Ned wurn't doing naw 'arm."

"Ef he doos it again, ef he cooms between thee and me, Dorsy, I shall do 'im in."

"Naw, tha maunna talk that road."

"It's Gawd's truth. Anybody that cooms between thee and me, loove, I shall do 'im in. Ef 'twas thy aunt, I should wring 'er neck, same as I wroong Ned's."

"And ef it was me, Steven?"

"If it wur, ef tha left me—aw, doan't tha assk me, Dorsy."

"There—that's 'ow tha scares me."

"But tha 'astna left me—'tes thy wedding claithe tha'rt making."

"Aye, 'tes my wedding claithe."

She had started fingering the white stuff, looking at it with her head on one side, smiling prettily. Then all of a sudden she had flung it down in a heap and burst out crying. When he tried to comfort her she pushed him off and ran out of the room, to Mr. Greathead.

It must have been half an hour ago and she had not come back yet.

He got up and went through the yard gates into the dark drive. Turning there, he came to the house front and the lighted window of the study. Hidden behind a clump of yew, he looked in.

Mr. Greathead had risen from his chair. He was a little old man, shrunk and pinched, with a bowed narrow back and slender neck under his grey hanks of hair.

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Dorsy stood before him, facing Steven. The lamplight fell full on her. Her sweet flower-face was flushed. She had been crying.

Mr. Greathead spoke.

"Well, that's my advice," he said. "Think it over, Dorsy, before you do anything."

That night Dorsy packed her boxes, and the next day at noon, when Steven came in for his dinner, she had left the Lodge. She had gone back to her father's house in Garthdale.

She wrote to Steven saying that she had thought it over and found she daren't marry him. She was afraid of him. She would be too unhappy.

## II

That was the old man, the old man. He had made her give him up. But for that, Dorsy would never have left him. She would never have thought of it herself. And she would never have got away if he had been there to stop her. It wasn't Ned. Ned was going to marry Nancy Peacock down at Morfe. Ned hadn't done any harm.

It was Mr. Greathead who had come between them. He hated Mr. Greathead.

His hate became a nausea of physical loathing that never ceased. Indoors he served Mr. Greathead as footman and valet, waiting on him at meals, bringing the hot water for his bath, helping him to dress and undress. So that he could never get away from him. When he came to call him in the morning, Steven's stomach heaved at the sight of the shrunken body under the bedclothes, the flushed, pinched face with its peaked, finicking nose upturned, the thin silver tuft of hair pricked up above the pillow's edge. Steven shivered with hate at the sound of the rattling, old man's cough, and the "shoob-



## THE VICTIM

shoob" of the feet shuffling along the flagged passages.

He had once had a feeling of tenderness for Mr. Greathead as the tie that bound him to Dorsy. He even brushed his coat and hat tenderly, as if he loved them. Once Mr. Greathead's small, close smile—the greyish bud of the lower lip pushed out, the upper lip lifted at the corners—and his kind, thin "Thank you, my lad," had made Steven smile back, glad to serve Dorsy's master. And Mr. Greathead would smile again and say, "It does me good to see your bright face, Steven." Now Steven's face writhed in a tight contortion to meet Mr. Greathead's kindness, while his throat ran dry and his heart shook with hate.

At meal-times from his place by the sideboard he would look on at Mr. Greathead eating, in a long, contemplative disgust. He could have snatched the plate away from under the slow, fumbling hands that hovered and hesitated. He would catch words coming into his mind: "He ought to be dead. He ought to be dead." To think that this thing that ought to be dead, this old, shrivelled skin-bag of creaking bones should come between him and Dorsy, should have power to drive Dorsy from him.

One day when he was brushing Mr. Greathead's soft felt hat a paroxysm of hatred gripped him. He hated Mr. Greathead's hat. He took a stick and struck at it again and again; he threw it on the flags and stamped on it, clenching his teeth and drawing in his breath with a sharp hiss. He picked up the hat, looking round furtively, for fear lest Mr. Greathead or Dorsy's successor, Mrs. Blenkirron, should have seen him. He pinched and pulled it back into shape and brushed it carefully and hung it on the stand. He was ashamed, not of his violence, but of its futility.

Nobody but a damned fool, he said to himself, would have done that. He must have been mad.

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It wasn't as if he didn't know what he was going to do. He had known ever since the day when Dorsy left him.

"I shan't be myself again till I've done him in," he thought.

He was only waiting till he had planned it out; till he was sure of every detail; till he was fit and cool. There must be no hesitation, no uncertainty at the last minute, above all, no blind, headlong violence. Nobody but a fool would kill in mad rage, and forget things, and be caught and swing for it. Yet that was what they all did. There was always something they hadn't thought of that gave them away.

Steven had thought of everything, even the date, even the weather.

Mr. Greathead was in the habit of going up to London to attend the debates of a learned Society he belonged to that held its meetings in May and November. He always travelled up by the five o'clock train, so that he might go to bed and rest as soon as he arrived. He always stayed for a week and gave his housekeeper a week's holiday. Steven chose a dark, threatening day in November, when Mr. Greathead was going up to his meeting and Mrs. Blenkiron had left Eastthwaite for Morfe by the early morning bus. So that there was nobody in the house but Mr. Greathead and Steven.

Eastthwaite Lodge stands alone, grey, hidden between the shoulder of the moor and the ash trees of its drive. It is approached by a bridle-path across the moor, a turning off the road that runs from Eastthwaite in Rathdale to Shawe in Westleydale, about a mile from the village and a mile from Hardraw Pass. No tradesmen visited it. Mr. Greathead's letters and newspaper were shot into a post-box that hung on the ash tree at the turn.

The hot water laid on in the house was not hot enough for Mr. Greathead's bath, so that every morning, while

## THE VICTIM

Mr. Greathead shaved, Steven came to him with a can of boiling water.

Mr. Greathead, dressed in a mauve and grey striped sleeping-suit, stood shaving himself before the looking-glass that hung on the wall beside the great white bath. Steven waited with his hand on the cold tap, watching the bright curved rod of water falling with a thud and a splash.

In the white, stagnant light from the muffed window-pane the knife-blade flame of a small oil-stove flickered queerly. The oil sputtered and stank.

Suddenly the wind hissed in the water-pipes and cut off the glittering rod. To Steven it seemed the suspension of all movement. He would have to wait there till the water flowed again before he could begin. He tried not to look at Mr. Greathead and the lean wattles of his lifted throat. He fixed his eyes on the long crack in the soiled green distemper of the wall. His nerves were on edge with waiting for the water to flow again. The fumes of the oil-stove worked on them like a rank intoxicant. The soiled green wall gave him a sensation of physical sickness.

He picked up a towel and hung it over the back of a chair. Thus he caught sight of his own face in the glass above Mr. Greathead's; it was livid against the soiled green wall. Steven stepped aside to avoid it.

"Don't you feel well, Steven?"

"No, sir." Steven picked up a small sponge and looked at it.

Mr. Greathead had laid down his razor and was wiping the lather from his chin. At that instant, with a gurgling, spluttering haste, the water leaped from the tap.

It was then that Steven made his sudden, quiet rush. He first gagged Mr. Greathead with the sponge, then

pushed him back and back against the wall and pinned him there with both hands round his neck, as he had pinned Ned Oldishaw. He pressed in on Mr. Greathead's throat, strangling him.

Mr. Greathead's hands flapped in the air, trying feebly to beat Steven's off; then his arms, pushed back by the heave and thrust of Steven's shoulders, dropped. Mr. Greathead's body sank, sliding along the wall, and fell to the floor, Steven still keeping his hold, mounting it, gripping it with his knees. His fingers tightened, pressing back the blood. Mr. Greathead's face swelled up; it changed horribly. There was a groaning and rattling sound in his throat. Steven pressed in till it had ceased.

Then he stripped himself to the waist. He stripped Mr. Greathead of his sleeping-suit and hung his naked body face downwards in the bath. He took the razor and cut the great arteries and veins in the neck. He pulled up the plug of the waste-pipe, and left the body to drain in the running water.

He left it all day and all night.

He had noticed that murderers swung just for want of attention to little things like that; messing up themselves and the whole place with blood; always forgetting something essential. He had no time to think of horrors. From the moment he had murdered Mr. Greathead his own neck was in danger; he was simply using all his brain and nerve to save his neck. He worked with the stern, cool hardness of a man going through with an unpleasant, necessary job. He had thought of everything.

He had even thought of the dairy.

It was built on to the back of the house under the shelter of the high moor. You entered it through the scullery, which cut it off from the yard. The window-panes had been removed and replaced by sheets of perforated zinc. A large corrugated glass skylight lit

## THE VICTIM

it from the roof. Impossible either to see in or to approach it from the outside. It was fitted up with a long, black slate shelf, placed, for the convenience of butter-makers, at the height of an ordinary work-bench. Steven had his tools, a razor, a carving-knife, a chopper and a meat-saw, laid there ready, beside a great pile of cotton waste.

Early the next day he took Mr. Greathead's body out of the bath, wrapped a thick towel round the neck and head, carried it down to the dairy and stretched it out on the slab. And there he cut it up into seventeen pieces.

These he wrapped in several layers of newspaper, covering the face and the hands first, because, at the last moment, they frightened him. He sewed them up in two sacks and hid them in the cellar.

He burnt the towel and the cotton waste in the kitchen fire; he cleaned his tools thoroughly and put them back in their places; and he washed down the marble slab. There wasn't a spot on the floor except for one flagstone where the pink rinsing of the slab had splashed over. He scrubbed it for half an hour, still seeing the rusty edges of the splash long after he had scoured it out.

He then washed and dressed himself with care.

As it was war-time Steven could only work by day, for a light in the dairy roof would have attracted the attention of the police. He had murdered Mr. Greathead on a Tuesday; it was now three o'clock on Thursday afternoon. Exactly at ten minutes past four he had brought out the car, shut in close with its black hood and side curtains. He had packed Mr. Greathead's suit-case and placed it in the car with his umbrella, railway rug, and travelling cap. Also, in a bundle, the clothes that his victim would have gone to London in.

He stowed the body in the two sacks beside him on the front.



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By Hardraw Pass, half-way between Eastthwaite and Shawe, there are three round pits, known as the Churns, hollowed out of the grey rock, and said to be bottomless. Steven had thrown stones, big as a man's chest, down the largest pit, to see whether they would be caught on any ledge or boulder. They had dropped clean, without a sound.

It poured with rain, the rain that Steven had reckoned on. The Pass was dark under the clouds and deserted. Steven turned his car so that the headlights glared on the pit's mouth. Then he ripped open the sacks and threw down, one by one, the seventeen pieces of Mr. Greathead's body, and the sacks after them, and the clothes.

It was not enough to dispose of Mr. Greathead's dead body; he had to behave as though Mr. Greathead were alive. Mr. Greathead had disappeared and he had to account for his disappearance. He drove on to Shawe station to the five o'clock train, taking care to arrive close on its starting. A troop train was due to depart a minute earlier. Steven, who had reckoned on the darkness and the rain, reckoned also on the hurry and confusion on the platform.

As he had foreseen, there were no porters in the station entry; nobody to notice whether Mr. Greathead was or was not in the car. He carried his things through on to the platform and gave the suit-case to an old man to label. He dashed into the booking-office and took Mr. Greathead's ticket, and then rushed along the platform as if he were following his master. He heard himself shouting to the guard, "Have you seen Mr. Greathead?" And the guard's answer "Naw!" And his own inspired statement, "He must have taken his seat in the front, then." He ran to the front of the train, shouldering his way among the troops. The drawn blinds of the carriages favoured him.

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Steven thrust the umbrella, the rug, and the travelling cap into an empty compartment, and slammed the door to. He tried to shout something through the open window; but his tongue was harsh and dry against the roof of his mouth, and no sound came. He stood, blocking the window, till the guard whistled. When the train moved he ran alongside with his hand on the window ledge, as though he were taking the last instructions of his master. A porter pulled him back.

"Quick work, that," said Steven.

Before he left the station he wired to Mr. Greathead's London hotel, announcing the time of his arrival.

He felt nothing, nothing but the intense relief of a man who has saved himself by his own wits from a most horrible death. There were even moments, in the week that followed, when, so powerful was the illusion of his innocence, he could have believed that he had really seen Mr. Greathead off by the five o'clock train. Moments when he literally stood still in amazement before his own incredible impunity. Other moments when a sort of vanity uplifted him. He had committed a murder that for sheer audacity and cool brain work surpassed all murders celebrated in the history of crime. Unfortunately the perfection of his achievement doomed it to oblivion. He had left not a trace.

Not a trace.

Only when he woke in the night a doubt sickened him. There was the rusted ring of that splash on the dairy floor. He wondered, had he really washed it out clean. And he would get up and light a candle and go down to the dairy to make sure. He knew the exact place; bending over it with the candle, he could imagine that he still saw a faint outline.

Daylight reassured him. *He* knew the exact place, but nobody else knew. There was nothing to distinguish it

from the natural stains in the flagstone. Nobody would guess. But he was glad when Mrs. Blenkiron came back again.

On the day that Mr. Greathead was to have come home by the four o'clock train Steven drove into Shawe and bought a chicken for the master's dinner. He met the four o'clock train and expressed surprise that Mr. Greathead had not come by it. He said he would be sure to come by the seven. He ordered dinner for eight; Mrs. Blenkiron roasted the chicken, and Steven met the seven o'clock train. This time he showed uneasiness.

The next day he met all the trains and wired to Mr. Greathead's hotel for information. When the manager wired back that Mr. Greathead had not arrived, he wrote to his relatives and gave notice to the police.

Three weeks passed. The police and Mr. Greathead's relatives accepted Steven's statements, backed as they were by the evidence of the booking-office clerk, the telegraph clerk, the guard, the porter who had labelled Mr. Greathead's luggage, and the hotel manager who had received his telegram. Mr. Greathead's portrait was published in the illustrated papers with requests for any information which might lead to his discovery. Nothing happened, and presently he and his disappearance were forgotten. The nephew who came down to Eastthwaite to look into his affairs was satisfied. His balance at his bank was low owing to the non-payment of various dividends, but the accounts and the contents of Mr. Greathead's cash-box and bureau were in order and Steven had put down every penny he had spent. The nephew paid Mrs. Blenkiron's wages and dismissed her and arranged with the chauffeur to stay on and take care of the house. And as Steven saw that this was the best way to escape suspicion, he stayed on.

Only in Westleydale and Rathdale excitement lingered.

## THE VICTIM

People wondered and speculated. Mr. Greathead had been robbed and murdered in the train (Steven said he had had money on him). He had lost his memory and wandered goodness knew where. He had thrown himself out of the railway carriage. Steven said Mr. Greathead wouldn't do *that*, but he shouldn't be surprised if he had lost his memory. He knew a man who forgot who he was and where he lived. Didn't know his own wife and children. Shell-shock. And lately Mr. Greathead's memory hadn't been what it was. Soon as he got it back he'd turn up again. Steven wouldn't be surprised to see him walking in any day.

But on the whole people noticed that he didn't care to talk much about Mr. Greathead. They thought this showed very proper feeling. They were sorry for Steven. He had lost his master and he had lost Dorsy Oldishaw. And if he *did* half kill Ned Oldishaw, well, young Ned had no business to go meddling with his sweetheart. Even Mrs. Oldishaw was sorry for him. And when Steven came into the bar of the "King's Arms" everybody said "Good-evening, Steve," and made room for him by the fire.

### III

Steven came and went now as if nothing had happened. He made a point of keeping the house as it would be kept if Mr. Greathead were alive. Mrs. Blenkiron, coming in once a fortnight to wash and clean, found the fire lit in Mr. Greathead's study and his slippers standing on end in the fender. Upstairs his bed was made, the clothes folded back, ready. This ritual guarded Steven not only from the suspicions of outsiders, but from his own knowledge. By behaving as though he believed that Mr. Greathead was still living he almost made himself believe it. By refusing to let his mind dwell on the murder he came

to forget it. His imagination saved him, playing the play that kept him sane, till the murder became vague to him and fantastic like a thing done in a dream. He had waked up and this was the reality; this round of care-taking, this look the house had of waiting for Mr. Greathead to come back to it. He had left off getting up in the night to examine the place on the dairy floor. He was no longer amazed at his impunity.

Then suddenly, when he really had forgotten, it ended. It was on a Saturday in January, about five o'clock. Steven had heard that Dorsy Oldishaw was back again, living at the "King's Arms" with her aunt. He had a mad, uncontrollable longing to see her again.

But it was not Dorsy that he saw.

His way from the Lodge kitchen into the drive was through the yard gates and along the flagged path under the study window. When he turned on to the flags he saw it shuffling along before him. The lamplight from the window lit it up. He could see distinctly the little old man in the long, shabby overcoat, with the grey woollen muffler round his neck hunched up above his collar, lifting the thin grey hair that stuck out under the slouch of the black hat.

In the first moment that he saw it Steven had no fear. He simply felt that the murder had not happened, that he really *had* dreamed it, and that this was Mr. Greathead come back, alive among the living. The phantasm was now standing at the door of the house, its hand on the door-knob as if about to enter.

But when Steven came up to the door it was not there.

He stood, fixed, staring at the space which had emptied so horribly. His heart heaved and staggered, snatching at his breath. And suddenly the memory of the murder rushed at him. He saw himself in the bathroom, shut in with his victim by the soiled green walls. He smelt the



## THE VICTIM

reek of the oil-stove; he heard the water running from the tap. He felt his feet springing forward, and his fingers pressing, tighter and tighter, on Mr. Greathead's throat. He saw Mr. Greathead's hands flapping helplessly, his terrified eyes, his face swelling and discoloured, changing horribly, and his body sinking to the floor.

He saw himself in the dairy, afterwards; he could hear the thudding, grinding, scraping noises of his tools. He saw himself on Hardraw Pass and the headlights glaring on the pit's mouth. And the fear and the horror he had not felt then came on him now.

He turned back; he bolted the yard gates and all the doors of the house, and shut himself up in the lighted kitchen. He took up his magazine, *The Autocar*, and forced himself to read it. Presently his terror left him. He said to himself it was nothing. Nothing but his fancy. He didn't suppose he'd ever see anything again.

Three days passed. On the third evening, Steven had lit the study lamp and was bolting the window when he saw it again.

It stood on the path outside, close against the window, looking in. He saw its face distinctly, the greyish, stuck-out bud of the under lip, and the droop of the pinched nose. The small eyes peered at him, glittering. The whole figure had a glassy look between the darkness behind it and the pane. One moment it stood outside, looking in; and the next it was mixed up with the shimmering picture of the lighted room that hung there on the blackness of the trees. Mr. Greathead then showed as if reflected, standing with Steven in the room.

And now he was outside again, looking at him, looking at him through the pane.

Steven's stomach sank and dragged, making him feel sick. He pulled down the blind between him and Mr.

Greathead, clamped the shutters to and drew the curtains over them. He locked and double-bolted the front door, all the doors, to keep Mr. Greathead out. But, once that night, as he lay in bed, he heard the "shoob-shoob" of feet shuffling along the flagged passages, up the stairs, and across the landing outside his door. The door handle rattled; but nothing came. He lay awake till morning, the sweat running off his skin, his heart plunging and quivering with terror.

When he got up he saw a white, scared face in the looking-glass. A face with a half-open mouth, ready to blab, to blurt out his secret; the face of an idiot. He was afraid to take that face into Eastthwaite or into Shawe. So he shut himself up in the house, half starved on his small stock of bread, bacon and groceries.

Two weeks passed; and then it came again in broad daylight.

It was Mrs. Blenkiron's morning. He had lit the fire in the study at noon and set up Mr. Greathead's slippers in the fender. When he rose from his stooping and turned round he saw Mr. Greathead's phantasm standing on the hearthrug close in front of him. It was looking at him and smiling in a sort of mockery, as if amused at what Steven had been doing. It was solid and completely lifelike at first. Then, as Steven in his terror backed and backed away from it (he was afraid to turn and feel it there behind him), its feet became insubstantial. As if undermined, the whole structure sank and fell together on the floor, where it made a pool of some whitish glistening substance that mixed with the pattern of the carpet and sank through.

That was the most horrible thing it had done yet, and Steven's nerve broke under it. He went to Mrs. Blenkiron, whom he found scrubbing out the dairy.

She sighed as she wrung out the floor-cloth.

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"Eh, these owd yellor stawnes, scroob as you will they'll navver look clean."

"Naw," he said. "Scroob and scroob, you'll navver get them clean."

She looked up at him.

"Eh, lad, what ails 'ee? Ye've got a faace like a wroong dishclout hanging ower t'sink."

"I've got the colic."

"Aye, an' naw woonder wi' the damp, and they misties, an' your awn bad cooking. Let me roon down t' 'King's Arms' and get you a drop of whiskey."

"Naw, I'll gaw down mysen."

He knew now he was afraid to be left alone in the house. Down at the "King's Arms" Dorsy and Mrs. Oldishaw were sorry for him. By this time he was really ill with fright. Dorsy and Mrs. Oldishaw said it was a chill. They made him lie down on the settle by the kitchen fire and put a rug over him, and gave him stiff hot grog to drink. He slept. And when he woke he found Dorsy sitting beside him with her sewing.

He sat up and her hand was on his shoulder.

"Lay still, lad."

"I maun get oop and gaw."

"Nay, there's naw call for 'ee to gaw. Lay still and I'll make thee a coop o' tea."

He lay still.

Mrs. Oldishaw had made up a bed for him in her son's room, and they kept him there that night and till four o'clock the next day.

When he got up to go Dorsy put on her coat and hat.

"Is tha gawing out, Dorsy?"

"Aye. I canna let thee gaw and set there by thysen. I'm cooming oop to set with 'ee till night time."

She came up and they sat side by side in the Lodge kitchen by the fire as they used to sit when they were

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together there, holding each other's hands and not talking.

"Dorsy," he said at last, "what astha coom for? Astha coom to tall me that'll navver speak to me again?"

"Nay. Tha knaws what I've coom for."

"To saay that'll marry me?"

"Aye."

"I maunna marry thee, Dorsy. 'Twouldn't be right."

"Right? What dostha mean? 'Twouldn't be right for me to coom and set wi' thee this road ef I doan't marry thee."

"Nay. I darena. Tha said tha was afraid of me, Dorsy. I doan't want 'ee to be afraid. Tha said tha'd be unhappy. I doan't want 'ee to be unhappy."

"That was lasst year. I'm not afraid of 'ee, now, Steve."

"Tha doan't know me, lass."

"Aye, I know thee, I know tha's sick and starved for want of me. Tha canna live wi'out thy awn lass to take care of 'ee."

She rose.

"I maun gaw now. But I'll be oop to-morrow and the next day."

And to-morrow and the next day and the next, at dusk, the hour that Steven most dreaded, Dorsy came. She sat with him till long after the night had fallen.

Steven would have felt safe so long as she was with him, but for his fear that Mr. Greathead would appear to him while she was there and that she would see him. If Dorsy knew he was being haunted she might guess why. Or Mr. Greathead might take some horrible blood-dripping and dismembered shape that would show her how he had been murdered. It would be like him, dead, to come between them as he had come when he was living.

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They were sitting at the round table by the fireside. The lamp was lit and Dorsy was bending over her sewing. Suddenly she looked up, her head on one side, listening. Far away inside the house, on the flagged passage from the front door, he could hear the "shoob-shoob" of the footsteps. He could almost believe that Dorsy shivered. And somehow, for some reason, this time he was not afraid.

"Steven," she said, "didsta 'ear anything?"

"Naw. Nobbut t' wind oonder t' roogs."

She looked at him; a long wondering look. Apparently it satisfied her, for she answered: "Aye, mebbe 'tes nobbut t' wind," and went on with her sewing.

He drew his chair nearer to her to protect her if it came. He could almost touch her where she sat.

The latch lifted. The door opened, and, his entrance and his passage unseen, Mr. Greathead stood before them.

The table hid the lower half of his form; but above it he was steady and solid in his terrible semblance of flesh and blood.

Steven looked at Dorsy. She was staring at the phantasm with an innocent, wondering stare that had no fear in it at all. Then she looked at Steven. An uneasy, frightened, searching look, as though to make sure whether he had seen it.

That was her fear—that *he* should see it, that *he* should be frightened, that *he* should be haunted.

He moved closer and put his hand on her shoulder. He thought, perhaps, she might shrink from him because she knew that it *was* he who was haunted. But no, she put up her hand and held his, gazing up into his face and smiling.

Then, to his amazement, the phantasm smiled back at them; not with mockery, but with a strange and ter-



rible sweetness. Its face lit up for one instant with a sudden, beautiful, shining light; then it was gone.

"Did tha see 'im, Steve?"

"Aye."

"Astha seen annything afore?"

"Aye, three times I've seen 'im."

"Is it that 'as scared thee?"

"'Oo tawled 'ee I was scared?"

"I knawed. Because nowt can 'appen to thee but I maun knaw it."

"What dostha think, Dorsy?"

"I think tha needna be scared, Steve. 'E's a kind ghawst. Whatever 'e is 'e doan't mean thee no 'arm. T'owd gentleman navver did when he was alive."

"Didn' 'e? Didn' 'e? 'E served me the woorst turn 'e could when 'e coomed between thee and me."

"Whatever makes 'ee think that, lad?"

"I doan' think it. I *knaw*."

"Nay, loove, tha dostna."

"'E did. 'E did, I tell thee."

"Doan' tha say that," she cried. "Doan' tha say it, Stevey."

"Why whouldn't I?"

"Tha'll set folk talking that road."

"What do they know to talk about?"

"Ef they was to remember what tha said."

"And what did I say?"

"Why, that ef annybody was to coom between thee and me, tha'd do them in."

"I wasna thinking of 'im. Gawd knaws I wasna."

"*They* doan't," she said.

"*Tha* knaws? Tha knaws I didna mean 'im?"

"Aye, I know, Steve."

"An', Dorsy, tha 'rn't afraid of me? Tha 'rn't afraid of me anny more?"

## THE VICTIM

"Nay, lad. I loove thee too mooch. I shall navver be afraid of 'ee again. Would I coom to thee this road ef I was afraid?"

"Tha'll be afraid now."

"And what should I be afraid of?"

"Why—'im."

"'Im? I should be a deal more afraid to think of 'ee setting with 'im oop 'ere, by thysen. Wuntha coom down and sleep at aunt's?"

"That I wunna. But I shall set 'ee on t' road passt t' moor."

He went with her down the bridle-path and across the moor and along the main road that led through East-thwaite. They parted at the turn where the lights of the village came in sight.

The moon had risen as Steven went back across the moor. The ash tree at the bridle-path stood out clear, its hooked, bending branches black against the grey moor-grass. The shadows in the ruts laid stripes along the bridle-path, black on grey. The house was black-grey in the darkness of the drive. Only the lighted study window made a golden square in its long wall.

Before he could go to bed he would have to put out the study lamp. He was nervous; but he no longer felt the sickening and sweating terror of the first hauntings. Either he was getting used to it, or—something had happened to him.

He had closed the shutters and put out the lamp. His candle made a ring of light around the table in the middle of the room. He was about to take it up and go when he heard a thin voice calling his name: "Steven." He raised his head to listen. The thin thread of sound seemed to come from outside, a long way off, at the end of the bridle-path.

"Steven, Steven—"

This time he could have sworn the sound came from inside his head, like the hiss of air in his ears.

"Steven—"

He knew the voice now. It was behind him in the room. He turned, and saw the phantasm of Mr. Great-head sitting, as he used to sit, in the arm-chair by the fire. The form was dim in the dusk of the room outside the ring of candlelight. Steven's first movement was to snatch up the candlestick and hold it between him and the phantasm, hoping that the light would cause it to disappear. Instead of disappearing the figure became clear and solid, indistinguishable from a figure of flesh and blood dressed in black broadcloth and white linen. Its eyes had the shining transparency of blue crystal; they were fixed on Steven with a look of quiet, benevolent attention. Its small, narrow mouth was lifted at the corners, smiling.

It spoke.

"You needn't be afraid," it said.

The voice was natural now, quiet, measured, slightly quavering. Instead of frightening Steven it soothed and steadied him.

He put the candle on the table behind him and stood up before the phantasm, fascinated.

"*Why* are you afraid?" it asked.

Steven couldn't answer. He could only stare, held there by the shining, hypnotizing eyes.

"You are afraid," it said, "because you think I'm what you call a ghost, a supernatural thing. You think I'm dead and that you killed me. You think you took a horrible revenge for a wrong you thought I did you. You think I've come back to frighten you, to revenge myself in my turn.

"And every one of these thoughts of yours, Steven, is wrong. I'm real, and my appearance is as natural and

## THE VICTIM

real as anything in this room—*more* natural and more real if you did but know. You didn't kill me, as you see; for here I am, as alive, more alive than you are. Your revenge consisted in removing me from a state which had become unbearable to a state more delightful than you can imagine. I don't mind telling you, Steven, that I was in serious financial difficulties (which, by the way, is a good thing for you, as it provides a plausible motive for my disappearance). So that, as far as revenge goes, the thing was a complete frost. You were my benefactor. Your methods were somewhat violent, and I admit you gave me some disagreeable moments before my actual deliverance; but as I was already developing rheumatoid arthritis there can be no doubt that in your hands my death was more merciful than if it had been left to nature. As for the subsequent arrangements, I congratulate you, Steven, on your coolness and resource. I always said you were equal to any emergency, and that your brains would pull you safe through any scrape. You committed an appalling and dangerous crime, a crime of all things the most difficult to conceal, and you contrived so that it was not discovered and never will be discovered. And no doubt the details of this crime seemed to you horrible and revolting to the last degree; and the more horrible and the more revolting they were, the more you piqued yourself on your nerve in carrying the thing through without a hitch.

"I don't want to put you entirely out of conceit with your performance. It was very creditable for a beginner, very creditable indeed. But let me tell you, this idea of things being horrible and revolting is an illusion. The terms are purely relative to your limited perceptions.

"I'm speaking now to your intelligence—I don't mean that practical ingenuity which enabled you to dispose of me so neatly. When I say intelligence I mean intelligence.

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All you did, then, was to redistribute matter. To our incorruptible sense matter never takes any of these offensive forms in which it so often appears to you. Nature has evolved all this horror and repulsion just to prevent people from making too many little experiments like yours. You mustn't imagine that these things have any eternal importance. Don't flatter yourself you've electrified the universe. For minds no longer attached to flesh and blood, that horrible butchery you were so proud of, Steven, is simply silly. No more terrifying than the spilling of red ink or the rearrangement of a jig-saw puzzle. I saw the whole business, and I can assure you I felt nothing but intense amusement. Your face, Steven, was so absurdly serious. You've no idea what you looked like with that chopper, I'd have appeared to you then and told you so, only I knew I should frighten you into fits.

"And there's another grand mistake, my lad—your thinking that I'm haunting you out of revenge, that I'm trying to frighten you. . . . My dear Steven, if I'd wanted to frighten you I'd have appeared in a very different shape, I needn't remind you what shape I might have appeared in. . . . What do you suppose I've come for?"

"I don't know," said Steven in a husky whisper. "Tell me."

"I've come to forgive you. And to save you from horror you *would* have felt sooner or later. And to stop your going on with your crime."

"You needn't," Steven said. "I'm not going on with it. I shall do no more murders."

"There you are again. Can't you understand that I'm not talking about your silly butcher's work? I'm talking about your *real* crime. Your real crime was hating me.

"And your hate was a blunder, Steven. You hated me for something I hadn't done."

"Aye, what did you do? Tell me that."



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"You thought I came between you and your sweetheart. That night when Dorsy spoke to me, you thought I told her to throw you over, didn't you?"

"Aye. And what did you tell her?"

"I told her to stick to you. It was you, Steven, who drove her away. You frightened the child. She said she was afraid for her life of you. Not because you half killed that poor boy, but because of the look on your face before you did it. The look of hate, Steven.

"I told her not to be afraid of you. I told her that if she threw you over you might go altogether to the devil; that she might even be responsible for some crime. I told her that if she married you and was faithful—if *she loved you*—I'd answer for it you'd never go wrong.

"She was too frightened to listen to me. Then I told her to think over what I'd said before she did anything. You heard me say that."

"Aye. That's what I heard you say. I didn' knaw. I didn' knaw. I thought you'd set her agen me."

"If you don't believe me, you can ask her, Steven."

"That's what she said t'other night. That you navver coom between her and me. Navver."

"Never," the phantasm said. "And you don't hate me now."

"Naw. Naw. I should navver 'a hated 'ee. I should navver 'a laid a finger on thee, ef I'd knawn."

"It's not your laying fingers on me, it's your hatred that matters. If that's done with, the whole thing's done with."

"Is it? Is it? Ef it was knawn, I should have to hang for it. Maunna I gie mysen oop? Tell me, maun I gie mysen oop?"

"You want me to decide that for you?"

"Aye. Doan't gaw," he said. "Doan't gaw."

It seemed to him that Mr. Greathead's phantasm was

getting a little thin, as if it couldn't last more than an instant. He had never so longed for it to go, as he longed now for it to stay and help him.

"Well, Steven, any flesh-and-blood man would tell you to go and get hanged to-morrow; that it was no more than your plain duty. And I daresay there are some mean, vindictive spirits even in my world who would say the same, not because *they* think death important but because they know *you* do, and want to get even with you that way.

"It isn't *my* way. I consider this little affair is strictly between ourselves. There isn't a jury of flesh-and-blood men who would understand it. They all think death so important."

"What do you want me to do, then? Tell me and I'll do it! Tell me!"

He cried it out loud; for Mr. Greathead's phantasm was getting thinner and thinner; it dwindled and fluttered, like a light going down. Its voice came from somewhere away outside, from the other end of the bridle-path.

"Go on living," it said. "Marry Dorsy."

"I darena. She doan' knaw I killed 'ee."

"Oh, yes"—the eyes flickered up, gentle and ironic—"she does. She knew all the time."

And with that the phantasm went out.

# THE HORLA

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

*8th May.*—What a perfect day! All the morning I lay stretched out on the grass in front of my house, under the towering plane-tree that spreads over the roof, giving protection and shade. I love this countryside, and love to live in this place, for here I am rooted fast by those deep and tender roots that bind a man to the soil where his forefathers lived and died, bind him to ways of thinking and eating, to customs and meat and drink, to the tones of the peasants' voices and turns of phrase, to the smell of the villages, the smell of the earth and the air itself.

I love this house of mine where I have grown to manhood. From my windows, I can see the Seine flowing by my garden, beyond the road—almost past my door, the broad river Seine which goes from Rouen to Havre, laden with passing boats.

Away to the left lies the city of Rouen, blue-roofed beneath the throng of its pointed Gothic spires; above them all, slender but strong, rises the cathedral's iron shaft. They are innumerable, these spires;—filled with bells that ring out under the azure of morning skies, sending forth to me their distant metal humming, their brazen song blown by the breeze, stronger now and now fainter, as it rises and falls.

How lovely it was this morning!

Towards eleven, a long line of barges, drawn by a tug the size of a fly, groaning and straining and belching volleys of smoke, filed past my gates.

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And after two English schooners, with red flags fluttering to the sky, came a noble Brazilian three-master, gleaming, spotlessly white from stem to stern. I saluted it, I don't know why, the sight of this vessel gave me such pleasure.

*16th May.*—For some days, I have had a touch of fever; I feel unwell, or rather, I feel depressed.

Whence come these mysterious influences, changing our happiness into gloom, our self-confidence into vague distress? One would think that the air, the transparent air, was full of unknowable powers, whose mysterious presence affected us. I wake up gay as a bird, feeling as though I must sing.—Why?—I go for a walk downstream; and suddenly, after strolling a little way, I turn back feeling disheartened, as if some misfortune awaited me at home.—Why?—Is it some cold shiver passing over me that has shaken my nerves, overshadowed my soul? Is it the shape of the clouds, or the colour of the day, the ever-changing hue of things, that has entered my eyes, to trouble my thoughts? Who can say? Everything about us, everything we look at but do not see, everything we brush against but do not know, everything we touch but do not feel, has on ourselves, on our senses, and through them, on our thoughts, on our very heart, effects that are sudden, surprising, inexplicable.

*18th May.*—I am ill, undoubtedly! And I was so well last month! I have a fever, a dreadful fever, or rather a feverish attack of nerves that afflicts my mind quite as much as my body. I have this constant, horrible feeling of a danger threatening, this apprehension of impending misfortune or approaching death, this presentiment which means no doubt the inroads of some disease, unknown as yet, at work in my blood and my flesh.

*21st May.*—I have been to see my doctor, for I could

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not sleep any longer. He found that I had a quickened pulse, dilated pupils and jangling nerves, but no disquieting symptom. I am to have douches and take bromide of potassium.

*25th May.*—No change whatever! My condition is indeed strange. As evening draws on, an unaccountable restlessness comes over me, as if the night held some dreadful menace in store for me. I dine quickly, then try to read; but I do not understand the words; I can hardly tell letter from letter. Up and down my room I go, oppressed by a vague and overmastering dread—dread of sleep, dread even of my bed.

Towards two, I go to my bedroom. No sooner inside, than I turn the key twice in the lock and shoot the bolts. I am frightened . . . of what? . . . I who have never been frightened before . . . I open my cupboards, look under my bed; I listen . . . listen . . . for what? Isn't it strange that a mere touch of something, a disturbed circulation perhaps, some irritation of the network of the nerves, a slight congestion, a tiny interruption in the delicate and very imperfect working of the vital machine, can turn one of the bravest of men into a coward, one of the gayest into a victim of melancholia? Then I go to bed and I wait for sleep as one might wait for the executioner. I wait in terror of its coming, with beating heart and trembling limbs; and my whole body shudders in the warmth of the sheets, up to the moment when I fall asleep of a sudden, as one would fall into a pit of stagnant water to drown.

I sleep—for some little time—two or three hours—then a dream—no—a nightmare, lays hold on me. I am quite aware that I am in bed and asleep—I feel it and know it—and I also feel that someone is drawing close to me, looking at me, feeling me, getting up on my bed, kneeling on



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my chest, taking my neck between his hands and squeezing . . . squeezing . . . with all his strength trying to strangle me.

And I struggle, bound down by that awful helplessness which paralyses us in dreams; I want to cry out—I cannot;—I want to move,—I cannot;—with fearful efforts, gasping for breath, I try to turn over, to throw off this being who chokes and stifles me,—I cannot!

Then suddenly, I wake up, frantic, bathed in sweat. I light a candle. I am alone.

After this attack, which comes every night, I sleep peacefully, until dawn.

*2nd June.*—I am worse. What can be the matter with me? The bromide is useless, the douches are useless.

*3rd June.*—An awful night. I am going away for a few days. No doubt a little holiday will set me right.

*2nd July.*—Home again. I am quite myself now. And my little holiday has been delightful.

*3rd July.*—Slept badly; clearly there is fever about, for my coachman is suffering from the same complaint as myself. Yesterday, as I came into the house, I noticed how unusually pale he looked.

“What’s the matter with you, John?” I asked.

“It’s like this, Sir; I don’t sleep now; me nights eat up me days. Ever since Master left, its been like an evil fate over me.”

The other servants are well; but I myself live in dread of a fresh attack.

*4th July.*—A fresh attack and no mistake! The old nightmares have come back. Last night, I felt someone crouching on top of me, who, with his mouth to mine, was drinking my life through my lips. Yes, he was draining it out of my throat, as would a leech. Then he got off me, gorged, and I woke up, so battered and bruised

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and exhausted, that I couldn't stir. If this goes on for many more days, I shall certainly leave home again.

*5th July.*—Have I lost my reason? What happened last night is so extraordinary, that my head feels queer when I think of it!

As is my habit every evening now, I had locked my bedroom door; then, feeling thirsty, I drank half a glass of water and I happened to notice that my water-bottle was full to the glass stopper.

I then went to bed, dropping off into one of my frightful dreams. After about two hours I was awakened by a seizure more frightful than any before.

Imagine a man who is being assassinated in his sleep, who awakes to find a knife in his lungs, and lies there covered with blood, with the death-rattle in his throat, unable to draw his breath, on the verge of death, understanding nothing at all—and there you have it.

When at last I recovered my senses, I was again thirsty; I lit a candle and went towards the table where my water-bottle stood. I lifted it, tipping it over my glass; nothing came out.—It was empty, entirely empty! At first, I was mystified; then, all at once, such a terrible feeling came over me, that I had to sit down, or rather, I tumbled into a chair! Then up I jumped again to gaze about me! In a bewilderment of astonishment and fear I sat down once more before the transparent water-bottle. I stared at it fixedly, trying to solve the riddle. My hands were trembling! Someone, then, had drunk this water. Who? I? I myself, no doubt! It could only be myself! Well then, I was a somnambulist; unknown to myself, I was living that strange double life which makes us wonder whether there are two creatures in us; or whether an alien creature, unknowable, invisible, quickens our captive limbs at times, when our mind is asleep, and they obey this other creature,

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just as they would, more faithfully than they would, obey ourselves.

Ah! who can understand my anguish? Who can understand how a man feels when, wide awake, and wholly reasonable, he stares in terror through the sides of a glass bottle, looking for a pint of water that has disappeared during his sleep! I stayed there until dawn, not daring to go back to my bed.

*6th July.*—I am going mad. My water-bottle was drained again last night: or rather, I drained it!

But did I do it? Did I? Who could it be? Who? Ah, God above! I am going mad! Who can save me!

*10th July.*—I have just been making the most remarkable tests. Most certainly I am mad! And yet! . . .

On July the 6th, before going to bed, I set out on my table wine, milk, water, bread and strawberries. Someone drank—I drank—all the water and a little milk. The wine was left untouched, also the strawberries.

On July the 7th, I tried the same test, with the same result.

On July the 8th, I tried without the water and milk. Nothing was touched.

And on July the 9th, I replaced the water and milk on my table by themselves, taking care to cover the bottles in white muslin and to tie down the corks. Then I rubbed my lips, beard and hands with black lead and went to bed.

The same inexorable sleep took possession of me, followed soon after by the horrible awakening. I hadn't stirred; the sheets themselves had no stain. I hastened to the table. The muslin covering the bottles remained spotless. I untied the strings, panting with fear. Every drop of water was drunk! Every drop of milk was drunk! Ah, God above!

I am leaving for Paris this morning.

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30th July.—I came home yesterday. All is well.

2nd August.—Nothing new; beautiful weather. I spend my days watching the Seine flowing by.

4th August.—Squabbles among my servants. They say that glasses are being broken, in the cupboards, at night. The butler accuses the cook, the cook accuses the washer-woman and she accuses the other two. Who is the culprit? It would take a wise man to say!

6th August.—This time, I am not mad. I have seen!—I have seen! Doubts are no longer possible—I have seen! I am still cold to the finger-tips, quaking to the marrow of my bones . . . I have seen!

At two o'clock, in bright sunlight, I was walking in my rose-garden . . . in the autumn rose-walk which is beginning to flower.

As I stopped to look at a *géant des batailles* that bore three splendid blooms, I saw, I distinctly saw, quite close to me, the stem of one of these roses bend, as if some invisible hand had twisted it, and snap off, as if the hand had plucked it. Then the flower rose in the air, following the curve that an arm would make when carrying it to a mouth, and there it stayed, hanging in the translucent air, quite alone, motionless, a terrifying splash of red, three paces from my eyes.

Aghast, I darted out my hand to snatch it! My hand found nothing; it had vanished. I was seized with a violent fit of anger against myself, for it is not right that a serious-minded, reasonable man should have delusions like this.

But was it really a delusion? I turned round to look for the stem and found it at once on the rose-tree, just freshly broken off, between the two remaining roses, still on their branch.

At that, I went indoors with my mind in a fearful state, for I am certain now, as certain that night follows day,

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that living near to me is an invisible being who feeds on water and milk, who can touch things, take them and move them about,—governed therefore by physical laws, though unperceived by our senses, and dwelling under my roof. . . .

*7th August.*—A peaceful night. He drank the water in my bottle but did not disturb my sleep.

I wonder if I am mad? While I was walking just now, in broad sunlight, along the river, doubts of my reason came to me—not vague doubts like those I have had so far, but doubts that were well-defined, real. I have seen madmen; I have known some who remained quite intelligent, clear-headed, far-seeing even in all the things of life, save on one point only. And while they talked on any subject with clearness, penetration and ease, suddenly their thought, striking on the reef of their madness, rent itself in pieces there, scattered and foundered in that wild and terrible ocean, swept by the rushing waves and mists and squalls, that we call insanity.

Certainly I should believe I was mad, quite mad, if I was not conscious of it all, well aware of my mental state, if I was not perfectly clear-headed, when probing down into its causes. Probably, then, I am only subject to delusions, and retain my reason. Some unknown disturbance must have taken place in my brain. Is it not possible that one of the imperceptible keys of the instrument within my brain has refused its work? An accident will sometimes deprive a man of his memory for proper names, or verbs, or figures, or simply dates. And the fact that these divisions of our thought are localised in the brain is well-established today. What cause for surprise, then, if the faculty that records within me the unreality of certain delusions should be dormant just now?

These were my thoughts as I strolled along the river bank. The sunshine flooded the water, made earth a de-



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light to behold, filling my heart with the love of life—love of the swallows, that rejoiced my eyes with their swiftness; of the sedges, that charmed my ears with their rustlings. Little by little, however, a strange uneasiness came creeping through me. Some power, as it seemed, some occult power was paralysing me, stopping me, restraining me from going farther, calling me back. I had the uncomfortable feeling that I must return which oppresses you when a beloved invalid is left behind at home, and you are seized with the presentiment that a turn for the worse has come.

Back, therefore, I came in spite of myself, sure that I would find bad news at home—a letter or telegram. But there was nothing, and I was left feeling more uneasy and more surprised than if I had again been through some strange experience.

*8th August.*—A frightful evening, last night. He no longer declares himself, but I feel him near me, eyeing me, pervading me, dominating me,—and more to be feared, hiding so, than if he was making his continual unseen presence known by supernatural signs.

Yet I slept well.

*9th August.*—Nothing, but I am afraid.

*11th August.*—Still nothing; I cannot stay at home any longer with this fear lodged in my mind; I am going away.

*12th August.*—10 P.M.—All day I have been wanting to leave the house; I couldn't. It was so simple, so easy, the voluntary act that I wished to accomplish—simply to go out, get into my carriage to drive to Rouen;—I couldn't. Why?

*14th August.*—I am done for! Someone is master of my mind and controls it! Someone commands my every act, movement, thought. I count for nothing, now, within myself; I am merely a terrified, slave-like witness to my

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actions. I want to go out. I cannot. He does not wish it; trembling and panic-stricken, I stay in the armchair where he keeps me. I want to get up, that I may believe I am still my own master. I cannot! I am rivetted to my chair and my chair cleaves so fast to the ground that no power would lift us.

Then, all at once, I must, simply must, must go to the end of my garden to pick strawberries and eat them. And I go. I pick the strawberries and I eat them. Ah, God, God, God! Is there a God? If God there be, save me! help me! deliver me! Mercy! Pity! Grace! Save me! O what agony! what torture! what terror!

*17th August.*—Ah, what a night! What a night! And yet it seems to me that I really should be rejoicing. I read until it was one in the morning! Hermann Here-strauss, doctor of philosophy and theogony, has written a book on the history and manifestations of every invisible being that hovers around mankind or is dreamed of in their dreams. He describes their origin, their domain, their powers. But not one of them resembles my familiar. One would say that man, ever since he has been able to think, has had some nervous foreknowledge of a new being, more powerful than himself, his successor in this world, and that, feeling him near but unable to foresee the nature of this over-man, in his terror he has created imaginary occult beings, shifting phantoms that have been born of fear.

After reading till one in the morning, I went to sit by my open window to refresh my forehead and my mind with the gentle air of night.

The air was warm and sweet. How I would have enjoyed that night in days gone by!

No moon. The stars flashed and sparkled in the black deeps of the sky. Who dwells in those worlds? What forms, what living creatures, what animals, what

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plants are yonder? They who think in these far-off worlds, what know they beyond our knowledge? What powers have they transcending our own? What things do they see that are hidden from us? And may not one of their kind, passing one day through space, come down to this earth of ours to conquer it, as the Normans once crossed the sea to conquer weaker races?

We are so weak; so defenceless, so ignorant, so small are we, on this whirling spot of slime mingled with a rain-drop!

I dozed off, dreaming in this fashion, in the cool night air.

After sleeping for about forty minutes, I opened my eyes, awakened by some vague and strange emotion. At first I saw nothing, then, all at once, it seemed to me that a page in the book lying open on my table had turned over of itself. Not one breath of air had passed in through my window. I was surprised, and waited. After about four minutes I saw, I saw—yes, with my eyes I saw one more page rise, then close down onto the one before, as if a finger had turned it over. My armchair was empty, *seemed* empty; but I understood that he was there, seated in my chair, and that he was reading. With one wild bound, the bound of an infuriated beast about to disembowl his tamer, I dashed across the room to seize him, throttle him, kill him! . . . But my chair, before I reached it, tipped over as if someone had fled before me . . . my table rocked, my lamp fell and went out, and my windows shut to as if some thief, caught in the act, had darted out into the night, grasping the frames with both hands.

He had fled, then; *he* had been frightened, frightened of me!

Well then . . . well then . . . tomorrow . . . or after . . . one day or another, I shall be able to seize him with my

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fingers and crush him! Are not dogs known to bite, sometimes, to choke the life out of their masters?

18th August.—I have been thinking all day. Ah, yes! I shall obey him, follow his suggestions, do everything that he wills, make myself humble, a slave, a craven. He has the upper hand. But the hour will come. . . .

19th August.—I know. . . . I know—all! I have just read this in the *Scientific Review*: "A curious item of news reaches us from Rio de Janeiro. An epidemic of madness, comparable to those waves of infectious insanity which attacked European peoples in the Middle Ages, is raging at the moment in the province of San Paolo. The frenzied inhabitants desert their houses, villages and fields, saying that they are pursued, possessed and controlled like human cattle by beings which are invisible though tangible, a kind of vampire which feeds on them during their sleep and also drinks water and milk without appearing to touch any other food.

"Professor Don Pedro Henriquez, accompanied by several distinguished doctors, has left for the province of San Paolo, to study *in situ* the causes and symptoms of this extraordinary madness and to propose to the Emperor the most fitting measures to restore the raving inhabitants to reason."

Aha, I remember, I remember the lovely Brazilian three-master that passed below my windows on her way up the Seine, last 8th of May! I thought her so beautiful, so white, so pleasant! The Being was on board, coming from the land where his race was born! And he saw me! He saw my white house, too; and he leapt from the ship to the shore. Ah, God above!

And now I know, I foresee. Man's reign on earth is over.

He has come, he that was feared in the innocent, trembling hearts of the early races. He who was ex-

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orcised by uneasy priests whom sorcerers summoned up on gloomy nights, though invisible as yet to their sight; He whom the forebodings of earth's momentary masters clothed in the monstrous or pleasing shapes of gnomes, spirits, genii, fairies and hobgoblins. After these first crude picturings of fearful minds, came men with greater insight, who foreshadowed him more clearly. Mesmer guessed at him, and ten years since, doctors learned the precise nature of his power, before he himself had wielded it. They have toyed with this weapon of the coming Lord, the domination of a mysterious will-power over the enslaved human mind. They have called it magnetism, hypnotism, suggestion . . . and what not. I have seen them playing like thoughtless children with this horrible power! Woe upon us! Woe upon Man! He has come, the . . . the . . . what is his name? . . . the . . . it seems as though he were calling out his name to me . . . and I cannot hear . . . the . . . yes . . . he is calling it . . . I am listening! . . . I can't quite . . . again! . . . the . . . Horla . . . I heard . . . the Horla . . . it is he . . . the Horla . . . he has come!

Ah, the vulture has devoured the dove, the wolf has devoured the lamb, and the lion the buffalo with his sharp-pointed horns; man has slain the lion with the arrow, the sword, and the gun; but the Horla will do unto Man what we have done unto the horse and the ox: his chattel, his servant and his food, by the sole might of his will. Woe upon us!

*19th August.*—I shall kill him. I have seen him! I sat down at my table yesterday evening, I pretended to be writing with great concentration. I knew right well that he would come roaming round me, close, close, so close that perhaps I could touch him, seize him? And then . . . I should have the strength of a desperate man,



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I should have my hands, my knees, my chest, my head, my teeth, to strangle him, crush him, bite him, rend him.

I was watching for him, with every nerve in my body tingling.

I had lit my two lamps and the eight candles over my mantelpiece, as if all this light would help me to make him out.

Facing me was my bed, my old four-poster of oak; to the right, my fireplace; to the left, my door, carefully shut now, after standing open a long time, to attract him; behind me, a great, high wardrobe with a mirror that I used every day for shaving and dressing and always glanced into from habit, to see myself at full length, whenever I passed before it.

So, I pretended to be writing, to mislead him, for he was on the watch; and, all of a sudden, I felt, I *knew* that he was reading over my shoulder, that he was there, touching my ear.

I jumped up, with hands outstretched, wheeling round so quickly that I nearly fell. Well? . . . my mirror was as bright as in broad daylight, and I could not see myself reflected! It was clear and bright and luminous to its very depth! My reflection did not appear there . . . yet I was standing right in front! I could see every inch of the clear tall mirror! Wild-eyed, I stared; and I hadn't the courage to advance one foot or make a single movement, knowing well as I did that he was there, but that he would escape me once more, the invisible-bodied one, who had swallowed up my reflection.

Imagine my fear! And then, behold! all at once I began to see myself in a mist, deep down in the mirror, in a mist as though through a sheet of water; and it seemed to me that the water was slowly gliding from left to right, leaving my reflection clearer with the passing of each second. It was like the end of an eclipse. The

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thing that shut me out did not seem to have clearly-marked outlines, but a kind of opaque transparence, thinning out by little degrees.

Then at last I was able to see myself perfectly, just as I do every day when I look in the glass.

So I had seen him! And the terror of it abides, making me shiver yet.

*20th August.*—Kill him, but how? I cannot grasp hold of him. Poison? He would see me mixing it in the water; moreover, would our poisons have any effect on his imperceptible body? They would not, they would certainly not. What then? What then?

*21st August.*—I have sent for a locksmith from Rouen, and have ordered iron shutters for my room, like those that certain private mansions in Paris have, before the lower storey windows, for fear of burglars. He is also making me a door to match. I have got the name of a coward, but what do I care!

*10th September.*—Rouen, Continental Hotel. It's done . . . it's done . . . but is he dead? My mind is still in a whirl after seeing it all.

Yesterday, then, after the locksmith had fitted my iron shutters and door, I left everything open until midnight, although it was beginning to be cold.

All at once, I felt that he was there, and was overjoyed, crazy with joy. I rose in leisurely fashion and sauntered up and down for a long while, to prevent his suspecting a thing; then I took off my boots and put on my slippers with a careless air; then I closed my iron shutters and strolling back to the door, shut the door also, turning the key twice. Returning them to the window, I made it fast with a padlock and pocketed the key.

Suddenly, I realised that he was following me about excitedly; that he in his turn was afraid, that he was com-

manding me to open and let him out. I all but gave way; but I did not give way; instead, I stood with my back to the door, opened a crack, just wide enough to let me slip through backwards; and as I am very tall, my head grazed the lintel. I was certain that he could not have escaped; and I shut him in, alone, alone. O joy! I had him! Then downstairs I went at a run; in the drawing-room below my bedroom I took my two lamps and emptied the oil out over the carpet, over the furniture, and all about; then I set light to it, and escaped, after carefully locking the big front door with two turns of the key.

And I went to hide myself at the bottom of my garden, in a clump of laurels. What a time it took! What a time it took! All was dark, silent, motionless; not a breath of air, not a star; mountainous clouds, that I could not see, but which weighed on my mind with a great and heavy weight.

I watched my house and waited. What a time it took! I was already beginning to think that the fire had gone out of itself or that *he* had put it out, when one of the lower windows, yielding before the thrust of the fire, fell out with a crash. A flame, a great tongue of flame, yellow and red, long, soft, caressing, climbed up the white wall, licking upwards to the roof. A gleam shot out into the trees, into the branches, into the leaves, and a shiver, too, a shiver of fear! The birds were waking; a dog began to howl; I thought day was dawning! Two other windows fell out the next moment and I saw that the entire lower storey of my dwelling was one raging furnace. But a cry, a dreadful cry, the piercing scream of a woman rang out into the night, and two garret windows flew open! I had forgotten my servants! I saw their terrified faces, their arms waving! . . .

Then, wild with horror, I set off at a run for the vil-

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lage, yelling: "Help! Help! Fire! Fire!" I met people already on their way from the village and turned back with them, to see.

But now the house was one vast, awe-inspiring bonfire, a monstrous bonfire that lit up the face of the earth, a bonfire in which human creatures were burning to death, and he, too, burned—he, my prisoner, the New Being, the new master, the Horla!

Suddenly the entire roof fell in, and a volcano of flames shot up sky-high.

Through every window opening into the furnace, I could see the cauldron of fire, and I thought how he was there, in that oven, dead. . . .

Dead? Perhaps? . . . His body? His body that was transparent to the light of day, could it be destroyed by the means that are deadly to our own?

And if he was not dead? . . . Time only, perhaps, lays hands upon the Terrible, Invisible Being. Why this transparent body, this unknowable body if he, too, must fear pains, wounds, sickness and untimely death?

Untimely death? All human terror lies therein! First Man, then the Horla. First comes he that may die on any day, in any hour, at any minute; through any accident thereafter, he that shall only die when his day and his hour and his minute have come, because he has attained his own life's bourne!

No, no, no, no . . . there is no room for doubt, no doubt at all! . . . He is not dead.

Well then . . . well then . . . then the only thing left to do is to kill—myself!

# THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

By MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

I ALWAYS thought my father took a long chance, but somebody had to take it and certainly I was the one least likely to be suspected. It was a wild country. There were no banks. We had to pay for the cattle, and somebody had to carry the money. My father and my uncle were always being watched. My father was right, I think.

"Abner," he said, "I'm going to send Martin. No one would ever suppose that we would trust this money to a child."

My uncle drummed on the table and rapped his heels on the floor. He was a bachelor, stern and silent. But he could talk . . . and when he did, he began at the beginning and you heard him through; and what he said—well, he stood behind it.

"To stop Martin," my father went on, "would be only to lose the money; but to stop you would be to get somebody killed."

I knew what my father meant. He meant that no one would undertake to rob Abner until after he had shot him to death.

I ought to say a word about my Uncle Abner. He was one of those austere, deeply religious men who were the product of the Reformation. He always carried a Bible in his pocket and he read it where he pleased. Once the crowd at Roy's Tavern tried to make sport of him when he got his book out by the fire; but they never tried again.

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## THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

When the fight was over Abner payed Roy eighteen silver dollars for the broken chairs and the table—and he was the only man in the tavern who could ride a horse. Abner belonged to the church militant, and his God was a war lord.

So that is how they came to send me. The money was in greenbacks in packages. They wrapped it up in newspaper and put it into a pair of saddle-bags, and I set out. I was about nine years old. No, it was not as bad as you think. I could ride a horse all day when I was nine years old—most any kind of a horse. I was tough as leather, and I knew the country I was going into. You must not picture a little boy rolling a hoop in the park.

It was an afternoon in early autumn. The clay roads froze in the night; they thawed out in the day and they were a bit sticky. I was to stop at Roy's Tavern, south of the river, and go on in the morning. Now and then I passed some cattle driver, but no one overtook me on the road until almost sundown; then I heard a horse behind me and a man came up. I knew him. He was a cattleman named Dix. He had once been a shipper, but he had come in for a good deal of bad luck. His partner, Alkire, had absconded with a big sum of money due the grazers. This had ruined Dix; he had given up his land, which wasn't very much, to the grazers. After that he had gone over the mountain to his people, got together a pretty big sum of money and bought a large tract of grazing land. Foreign claimants had sued him in the courts on some old title and he had lost the whole tract and the money he had paid for it. He had married a remote cousin of ours and he had always lived on her lands, adjoining those of my Uncle Abner.

Dix seemed surprised to see me on the road.

"So it's you, Martin," he said; "I thought Abner would be going into the upcountry."

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One gets to be a pretty cunning youngster, even at this age, and I told no one what I was about.

"Father wants the cattle over the river to run a month," I returned easily, "and I'm going up there to give his orders to the grazers."

He looked me over, then he rapped the saddle-bags with his knuckles. "You carry a good deal of baggage, my lad."

I laughed. "Horse feed," I said. "You know my father! A horse must be fed at dinner time, but a man can go till he gets it."

One was always glad of any company on the road, and we fell into an idle talk. Dix said he was going out into the Ten Mile country; and I have always thought that was, in fact, his intention. The road turned south about a mile our side of the tavern. I never liked Dix; he was of an apologetic manner, with a cunning, irresolute face.

A little later a man passed us at a gallop. He was a drover named Marks, who lived beyond my Uncle Abner, and he was riding hard to get in before night. He hailed us, but he did not stop; we got a shower of mud and Dix cursed him. I have never seen a more evil face. I suppose it was because Dix usually had a grin about his mouth, and when that sort of face gets twisted there's nothing like it.

After that he was silent. He rode with his head down and his fingers plucking at his jaw, like a man in some perplexity. At the crossroads he stopped and sat for some time in the saddle, looking before him. I left him there, but at the bridge he overtook me. He said he had concluded to get some supper and go on after that.

Roy's Tavern consisted of a single big room, with a loft above it for sleeping quarters. A narrow covered way connected this room with the house in which Roy and his family lived. We used to hang our saddles on wooden

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pegs in this covered way. I have seen that wall so hung with saddles that you could not find a place for another stirrup. But tonight Dix and I were alone in the tavern. He looked cunningly at me when I took the saddle-bags with me into the big room and when I went with them up the ladder into the loft. But he said nothing—in fact, he had scarcely spoken. It was cold; the road had begun to freeze when we got in. Roy had lighted a big fire. I left Dix before it. I did not take off my clothes, because Roy's beds were mattresses of wheat straw covered with heifer skins—good enough for summer but pretty cold on such a night, even with the heavy, hand-woven coverlet in big white and black checks.

I put the saddle-bags under my head and lay down. I went at once to sleep, but I suddenly awakened. I thought there was a candle in the loft, but it was a gleam of light from the fire below, shining through a crack in the floor. I lay and watched it, the coverlet pulled up to my chin. Then I began to wonder why the fire burned so brightly. Dix ought to be on his way some time and it was a custom for the last man to rake out the fire. There was not a sound. The light streamed steadily through the crack.

Presently it occurred to me that Dix had forgotten the fire and that I ought to go down and rake it out. Roy always warned us about the fire when he went to bed. I got up, wrapped the great coverlet around me, went over to the gleam of light and looked down through the crack in the floor. I had to lie out at full length to get my eye against the board. The hickory logs had turned to great embers and glowed like a furnace of red coals.

Before this fire stood Dix. He was holding out his hands and turning himself about as though he were cold to the marrow; but with all that chill upon him, when the man's face came into the light I saw it was covered with sweat.

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I shall carry the memory of that face. The grin was there at the mouth, but it was pulled about; the eyelids were drawn in; the teeth were clamped together. I have seen a dog poisoned with strychnine look like that.

I lay there and watched the thing. It was as though something potent and evil dwelling within the man were in travail to reform his face upon its image. You cannot realise how that devilish labor held me—the face worked as though it were some plastic stuff, and the sweat oozed through. And all the time the man was cold; and he was crowding into the fire and turning himself about and putting out his hands. And it was as though the heat would no more enter in and warm him than it will enter in and warm the ice.

It seemed to scorch him and leave him cold—and he was fearfully and desperately cold! I could smell the singe of the fire on him, but it had no power against this diabolic chill. I began myself to shiver, although I had the heavy coverlet wrapped around me.

The thing was a fascinating horror; I seemed to be looking down into the chamber of some abominable maternity. The room was filled with the steady red light of the fire. Not a shadow moved in it. And there was silence. The man had taken off his boots and he twisted before the fire without a sound. It was like the shuddering tales of possession or transformation by a drug. I thought the man would burn himself to death. His clothes smoked. How could he be so cold?

Then, finally, the thing was over! I did not see it for his face was in the fire. But suddenly he grew composed and stepped back into the room. I tell you I was afraid to look! I do not know what thing I expected to see there, but I did not think it would be Dix.

Well, it was Dix; but not the Dix any of us knew. There was a certain apology, a certain indecision, a cer-

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tain servility in that other Dix, and these things showed about his face. But there was none of these weaknesses in this man.

His face had been pulled into planes of firmness and decision; the slack in his features had been taken up; the furtive moving of the eye was gone. He stood now squarely on his feet and he was full of courage. But I was afraid of him as I have never been afraid of any human creature before! Something that had been servile in him, that had skulked behind disguises, that had worn the habiliments of subterfuge, had now come forth; and it had molded the features of the man to its abominable courage.

Presently he began to move swiftly about the room. He looked out at the window and he listened at the door; then he went softly into the covered way. I thought he was going on his journey; but then he could not be going with his boots there beside the fire. In a moment he returned with a saddle blanket in his hand and came softly across the room to the ladder.

Then I understood the thing that he intended, and I was motionless with fear. I tried to get up, but I could not. I could only lie there with my eye strained to the crack in the floor. His foot was on the ladder, and I could already feel his hand on my throat and that blanket on my face, when far away on the hard road I heard a horse!

He heard it, too, for he stopped on the ladder and turned his evil face about toward the door. The horse was on the long hill beyond the bridge, and he was coming as though the devil rode in his saddle. It was a hard, dark night. The frozen road was like flint; I could hear the iron of the shoes ring. Whoever rode that horse rode for his life or for something more than his life, or he was mad. I heard the horse strike the bridge and thunder



across it. And all the while Dix hung there on the ladder by his hands and listened. Now he sprang softly down, pulled on his boots and stood up before the fire, his face—this new face—gleaming with its evil courage. The next moment the horse stopped.

I could hear him plunge under the bit, his iron shoes ripping the frozen road; then the door leaped back and my Uncle Abner was in the room. I was so glad that my heart almost choked me and for a moment I could hardly see—everything was in a sort of mist.

Abner swept the room in a glance, then he stopped.

"Thank God!" he said; "I'm in time." And he drew his hand down over his face with the fingers hard and close as though he pulled something away.

"In time for what?" said Dix.

Abner looked him over. And I could see the muscles of his big shoulders stiffen as he looked. And again he looked him over. Then he spoke and his voice was strange.

"Dix," he said, "is it you?"

"Who would it be but me?" said Dix.

"It might be the devil," said Abner. "Do you know what your face looks like?"

"No matter what it looks like!" said Dix.

"And so," said Abner, "we have got courage with this new face."

Dix threw up his head.

"Now, look here, Abner," he said, "I've had about enough of your big manner. You ride a horse to death and you come plunging in here; what the devil's wrong with you?"

"There's nothing wrong with me," replied Abner, and his voice was low. "But there's something damnably wrong with you, Dix."

"The devil take you," said Dix, and I saw him measure

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Abner with his eye. It was not fear that held him back; fear was gone out of the creature; I think it was a kind of prudence.

Abner's eyes kindled, but his voice remained low and steady.

"Those are big words," he said.

"Well," cried Dix, "get out of the door then and let me pass!"

"Not just yet," said Abner; "I have something to say to you."

"Say it then," cried Dix, "and get out of the door."

"Why hurry?" said Abner. "It's a long time until daylight, and I have a good deal to say."

"You'll not say it to me," said Dix. "I've got a trip to make tonight; get out of the door."

Abner did not move. "You've got a longer trip to make tonight than you think, Dix," he said: "but you're going to hear what I have to say before you set out on it."

I saw Dix rise on his toes and I knew what he wished for. He wished for a weapon; and he wished for the bulk of bone and muscle that would have a chance against Abner. But he had neither the one nor the other. And he stood there on his toes and began to curse—low, vicious, withering oaths, that were like the swish of a knife.

Abner was looking at the man with a curious interest.

"It is strange," he said, as though speaking to himself, "but it explains the thing. While one is the servant of neither, one has the courage of neither; but when he finally makes his choice he gets what his master has to give him."

Then he spoke to Dix.

"Sit down!" he said; and it was in that deep, level voice that Abner used when he was standing close behind his words. Every man in the hills knew that voice; one had only a moment to decide after he had heard it. Dix knew that, and yet for one instant he hung there on his toes, his

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eyes shimmering like a weasel's, his mouth twisting. He was not afraid! If he had had the ghost of a chance against Abner he would have taken it. But he knew he had not, and with an oath he threw the saddle blanket into a corner and sat down by the fire.

Abner came away from the door then. He took off his great coat. He put a log on the fire and he sat down across the hearth from Dix. The new hickory sprang into flame. For a good while there was silence; the two men sat at either end of the hearth without a word. Abner seemed to have fallen into a study of the man before him. Finally he spoke:

"Dix," he said, "do you believe in the providence of God?"

Dix flung up his head.

"Abner," he cried, "if you are going to talk nonsense I promise you upon my oath that I will not stay to listen."

Abner did not at once reply. He seemed to begin now at another point.

"Dix," he said, "you've had a good deal of bad luck . . . . Perhaps you wish it put that way."

"Now, Abner," he cried, "you speak the truth; I have had hell's luck."

"Hell's luck you have had," replied Abner. "It is a good word. I accept it. Your partner disappeared with all the money of the grazers on the other side of the river; you lost the land in your lawsuit; and you are tonight without a dollar. That was a big tract of land to lose. Where did you get so great a sum of money?"

"I have told you a hundred times," replied Dix. "I got it from my people over the mountains. You know where I got it."

"Yes," said Abner. "I know where you got it, Dix. And I know another thing. But first I want to show you this," and he took a little penknife out of his pocket. "And

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I want to tell you that I believe in the providence of God, Dix."

"I don't care a fiddler's damn what you believe in," said Dix.

"But you do care what I know," replied Abner.

"What do you know?" said Dix.

"I know where your partner is," replied Abner.

I was uncertain about what Dix was going to do, but finally he answered with a sneer.

"Then you know something that nobody else knows."

"Yes," replied Abner, "there is another man who knows."

"Who?" said Dix.

"You," said Abner.

Dix leaned over in his chair and looked at Abner closely.

"Abner," he cried, "you are talking nonsense. Nobody knows where Alkire is. If I knew I'd go after him."

"Dix," Abner answered, and it was again in that deep, level voice, "if I had got here five minutes later you would have gone after him. I can promise you that, Dix.

"Now, listen! I was in the upcountry when I got your word about the partnership; and I was on my way back when at Big Run I broke a stirrup-leather. I had no knife and I went into the store and bought this one; then the storekeeper told me that Alkire had gone to see you. I didn't want to interfere with him and I turned back. . . . So I did not become your partner. And so I did not disappear. . . . What was it that prevented? The broken stirrup-leather? The knife? In old times, Dix, men were so blind that God had to open their eyes before they could see His angel in the way before them. . . . They are still blind, but they ought not to be that blind. . . . Well, on the night that Alkire disappeared I met him on the way to your house. It was out there at the bridge.

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He had broken a stirrup-leather and was trying to mend it with a nail. He asked me if I had a knife, and I gave him this one. It was beginning to rain and I went on, leaving him there in the road with the knife in his hand."

Abner paused; the muscles of his jaw contracted.

"God forgive me," he said; "it was His angel again! I never saw Alkire after that."

"Nobody ever saw him after that," said Dix. "He got out of the hills that night."

"No," replied Abner; "it was not in the night when Alkire started on his journey; it was in the day."

"Abner," said Dix, "you talk like a fool. If Alkire had traveled the road in the day, somebody would have seen him."

"Nobody could see him on the road he traveled," replied Abner.

"What road?" said Dix.

"Dix," replied Abner, "you will learn that soon enough."

Abner looked hard at the man.

"You saw Alkire when he started on his journey," he continued; "but did you see who it was that went with him?"

"Nobody went with him," replied Dix; "Alkire rode alone."

"Not alone," said Abner, "there was another."

"I didn't see him," said Dix.

"And yet," continued Abner, "you made Alkire go with him."

I saw cunning enter Dix's face. He was puzzled, but he thought Abner off the scent.

"And I made Alkire go with somebody, did I? Well, who was it? Did you see him?"

"Nobody ever saw him."

"He must be a stranger."



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"No," replied Abner, "he rode the hills before we came into them."

"Indeed!" said Dix. "And what kind of a horse did he ride?"

"White!" said Abner.

Dix got some inkling of what Abner meant now, and his face grew livid.

"What are you driving at?" he cried. "You sit here beating around the bush. If you know anything, say it out; let's hear it. What is it?"

Abner put out his big sinewy hand as though to thrust Dix back into his chair.

"Listen!" he said. "Two days after that I wanted to get out into the Ten Mile country and I went through your lands; I rode a path through the narrow valley west of your house. At a point on the path where there is an apple tree something caught my eye and I stopped. Five minutes later I knew exactly what had happened under that apple tree. . . . Someone had ridden there; he had stopped under that tree; then something happened and the horse ran away—I knew that by the tracks of a horse on this path. I knew that the horse had a rider and that it had stopped under this tree, because there was a limb cut from the tree at a certain height. I knew the horse had remained there, because the small twigs of the apple limb had been pared off, and they lay in a heap on the path. I knew that something had frightened the horse and that it had run away, because the sod was torn up where it had jumped. . . . Ten minutes later I knew that the rider had not been in the saddle when the horse jumped; I knew what it was that had frightened the horse; and I knew that the thing had occurred the day before. Now, how did I know that?"

"Listen! I put my horse into the tracks of that other horse and studied the ground. Immediately I saw where

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the weeds beside the path had been crushed, as though some animal had been lying down there, and in the very center of that bed I saw a little heap of fresh earth. That was strange, Dix, that fresh earth where the animal had been lying down! It had come there after the animal had got up, or else it would have been pressed flat. But where had it come from?

"I got off and walked around the apple tree, moving out from it in ever-widening circles. Finally I found an ant heap, the top of which had been scraped away as though one had taken up the loose earth in his hands. The under clods of it were colored as if with red paint. . . . No, it wasn't paint.

"There was a brush fence some fifty yards away. I went over to it and followed it down.

"Opposite the apple tree the weeds were again crushed as though some animal had lain there. I sat down in that place and drew a line with my eye across a log of the fence to a limb of the apple tree. Then I got on my horse and again put him in the tracks of that other horse under the tree; the imaginary line passed through the pit of my stomach! . . . I am four inches taller than Alkire."

It was then that Dix began to curse. I had seen his face work while Abner was speaking and that spray of sweat had reappeared. But he kept the courage he had got.

"Lord Almighty, man!" he cried. "How prettily you sum it up! We shall presently have Lawyer Abner with his brief. Because my renters have killed a calf; because one of their horses, frightened at the blood, had bolted; and because they cover the blood with earth so the other horses traveling the path may not do the like; straightway I have shot Alkire out of the saddle. . . . Man! What a mare's nest! And now, Lawyer Abner, with your neat little conclusions, what did I do with Alkire after I had killed him? Did I cause him to vanish into the air with a

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smell of sulphur or did I cause the earth to yawn and Alkire to descend into its bowels?"

"Dix," replied Abner, "your words move somewhat near the truth."

"Upon my soul," cried Dix, "you compliment me. If I had that trick of magic, believe me, you would be already some distance down."

Abner remained a moment silent.

"Dix," he said, "what does it mean when one finds a plot of earth resodded?"

"Is that a riddle?" cried Dix. "Well, confound me, if I don't answer it! You charge me with murder and then you fling in this neat conundrum. Now, what could be the answer to that riddle, Abner? If one had done a murder this sod would overlies a grave and Alkire would be in it in his bloody shirt. Do I give the answer?"

"You do not," replied Abner.

"No!" cried Dix. "Your sodded plot no grave, and Alkire not within it waiting for the trump of Gabriel! Why, man, where are your little damned conclusions?"

"Dix," said Abner, "you do not deceive me in the least; Alkire is not sleeping in a grave."

"Then in the air," sneered Dix, "with a smell of sulphur?"

"Nor in the air," said Abner.

"Then consumed with fire, like the priests of Baal?"

"Nor with fire," said Abner.

Dix had got back the quiet of his face; this banter had put him where he was when Abner entered. "This is all fool's talk," he said; "if I had killed Alkire, what could I have done with the body? And the horse! What could I have done with the horse? Remember, no man has ever seen Alkire's horse any more than he has seen Alkire—and for the reason that Alkire rode him out of the hills that night. Now, look here, Abner, you have asked me a

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good many questions. I will ask you one. Among your little conclusions do you find that I did this thing alone or with the aid of others?"

"Dix," replied Abner, "I will answer that upon my own belief you had no accomplice."

"Then," said Dix, "how could I have carried off the horse? Alkire I might carry; but his horse weighed thirteen hundred pounds!"

"Dix," said Abner, "no man helped you do this thing; but there were men who helped you to conceal it."

"And now," cried Dix, "the man is going mad! Who could I trust with such work, I ask you? Have I a renter that would not tell it when he moved on to another's land, or when he got a quart of cider in him? Where are the men who helped me?"

"Dix," said Abner, "they have been dead these fifty years."

I heard Dix laugh then, and his evil face lighted as though a candle were behind it. And, in truth, I thought he had got Abner silenced.

"In the name of Heaven!" he cried. "With such proofs it is a wonder that you did not have me hanged."

"And hanged you should have been," said Abner.

"Well," cried Dix, "go and tell the sheriff, and mind you lay before him those little, neat conclusions: How from a horse track and the place where a calf was butchered you have reasoned on Alkire's murder, and to conceal the body and the horse you have reasoned on the aid of men who were rotting in their graves when I was born; and see how he will receive you!"

Abner gave no attention to the man's flippant speech. He got his great silver watch out of his pocket, pressed the stem and looked. Then he spoke in his deep, even voice.

"Dix," he said, "it is nearly midnight; in an hour you

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must be on your journey, and I have something more to say. Listen! I knew this thing had been done the previous day because it had rained on the night that I met Alkire, and the earth of this ant heap had been disturbed after that. Moreover, this earth had been frozen, and that showed a night had passed since it had been placed there. And I knew the rider of that horse was Alkire because, beside the path near the severed twigs lay my knife, where it had fallen from his hand. This much I learned in some fifteen minutes; the rest took somewhat longer.

"I followed the track of the horse until it stopped in the little valley below. It was easy to follow while the horse ran, because the sod was torn; but when it ceased to run there was no track that I could follow. There was a little stream threading the valley, and I began at the wood and came slowly up to see if I could find where the horse had crossed. Finally I found a horse track and there was also a man's track, which meant that you had caught the horse and were leading it away. But where?

"On the rising ground above there was an old orchard where there had once been a house. The work about that house had been done a hundred years. It was rotted down now. You had opened this orchard into the pasture. I rode all over the face of this hill and finally I entered this orchard. There was a great, flat, moss-covered stone lying a few steps from where the house had stood. As I looked I noticed that the moss growing from it into the earth had been broken along the edges of the stone, and then I noticed that for a few feet about the stone the ground had been resodded. I got down and lifted up some of this new sod. Under it the earth had been soaked with that . . . red paint.

"It was clever of you, Dix, to resod the ground; that took only a little time and it effectually concealed the



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place where you had killed the horse; but it was foolish of you to forget that the broken moss around the edges of the great flat stone could not be mended."

"Abner!" cried Dix. "Stop!" And I saw that spray of sweat, and his face working like kneaded bread, and the shiver of that abominable chill on him.

Abner was silent for a moment and then he went on, but from another quarter.

"Twice," said Abner, "the Angel of the Lord stood before me and I did not know it; but the third time I knew it. It is not in the cry of the wind, nor in the voice of many waters that His presence is made known to us. That man in Israel had only the sign that the beast under him would not go on. Twice I had as good a sign, and tonight, when Marks broke a stirrup-leather before my house and called me to the door and asked me for a knife to mend it, I saw and I came!"

The log that Abner had thrown on was burned down, and the fire was again a mass of embers; the room was filled with that dull red light. Dix had got on to his feet, and he stood now twisting before the fire, his hands reaching out to it, and that cold creeping to his bones, and the smell of the fire on him.

Abner rose. And when he spoke his voice was like a thing that has dimensions and weight.

"Dix," he said, "you robbed the grazers; you shot Alkire out of his saddle; and a child you would have murdered!"

And I saw the sleeve of Abner's coat begin to move, then it stopped. He stood staring at something against the wall. I looked to see what the thing was, but I did not see it. Abner was looking beyond the wall, as though it had been moved away.

And all the time Dix had been shaking with that hellish cold, and twisting on the hearth and crowding into the

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fire. Then he fell back, and he was the Dix I knew—his face was slack; his eye was furtive; and he was full of terror.

It was his weak whine that awakened Abner. He put up his hand and brought the fingers hard down over his face, and then he looked at this new creature, cringing and beset with fears.

"Dix," he said, "Alkire was a just man; he sleeps as peacefully in that abandoned well under his horse as he would sleep in the churchyard. My hand has been held back; you may go. 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.'"

"But where shall I go, Abner?" the creature wailed; "I have no money and I am cold."

Abner took out his leather wallet and flung it toward the door.

"There is money," he said,—“a hundred dollars—and there is my coat. Go! But if I find you in the hills tomorrow, or if I ever find you, I warn you in the name of God that I will stamp you out of life!"

I saw the loathsome thing writhe into Abner's coat and seize the wallet and slip out through the door; and a moment later I heard a horse. And I crept back on to Roy's heifer skin.

When I came down at daylight my Uncle Abner was reading by the fire.

# THE CHILD'S STORY

By ARTHUR MACHEN

WHEN I was five years old I heard my mother talking about me when she thought I was not noticing. They were saying how queer I was a year or two before, and how nurse had called her to come and listen to me talking all to myself, and I was saying words nobody could understand. I was speaking the Xu language, but I only remember a few of the words, as it was about the little white faces that used to look at me when I was lying in my cradle. They used to talk to me, and I learnt their language and talked to them in it about some great white place where they lived, where the trees and the grasses were all white, and there were white hills as high up as the moon, and a cold wind. I have often dreamed of it afterwards, but the faces went away when I was very little. But a wonderful thing happened when I was about five. My nurse was carrying me on her shoulder; there was a field of yellow corn, and we went through it, it was very hot. Then we came to a path through a wood, and a tall man came after us, and went with us till we came to a place where there was a deep pool, and it was very dark and shady. Nurse put me down on the soft moss under a tree, and she said: "She can't get to the pond now." So they left me there and I sat quite still and watched, and out of the water came two wonderful white people, and they began to play and dance and sing. They were a kind of creamy white like the old

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## THE CHILD'S STORY

ivory figure in the drawing-room; one was a beautiful lady with kind, dark eyes, and a grave face, and long black hair, and she smiled such a strange sad smile at the other, who laughed and came to her. They played together, and danced round and round the pool, and they sang a song till I fell asleep. Nurse woke me when she came back, and she was looking something like the lady had looked, so I told her about it, and asked why she looked like that.

At first she cried, and then she looked very frightened, and turned quite pale. She put me down on the grass and stared at me, and I could see she was shaking all over. Then she said I had been dreaming, but I knew I hadn't. Then she made me promise not to say a word about it to anybody, and if I did I should be thrown into the black pit. I was not frightened at all, though nurse was, and I never forgot about it, because when I shut my eyes and it was quite quiet, and I was all alone, I could see them again, very faint and far away, but very splendid; and little bits of the song they sang came into my head, but I couldn't sing it.

I was thirteen, nearly fourteen, when I had a very singular adventure, so strange that the day on which it happened is always called the White Day. My mother had been dead for more than a year, and in the morning I had lessons, but they let me go out for walks in the afternoon. And this afternoon I walked a new way, and a little brook led me into a new country, but I tore my frock getting through some of the difficult places, as the way was through many bushes, and beneath the low branches of trees, and up thorny thickets on the hills, and by dark woods full of creeping thorns. And it was a long, long way. It seemed as if I was going on for ever and ever, and I had to creep by a place like a tunnel where a brook

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must have been, but all the water had dried up, and the floor was rocky, and the bushes had grown overhead till they met, so that it was quite dark. And I went on and on through that dark place; it was a long, long way. And I came to a hill that I never saw before. I was in a dismal thicket full of black twisted boughs that tore me as I went through them, and I cried out because I was smarting all over, and then I found that I was climbing, and I went up and up a long way, till at last the thicket stopped and I came out crying just under the top of a big bare place, where there were ugly grey stones lying all about on the grass, and here and there a little twisted stunted tree came out from under a stone, like a snake. And I went up, right to the top, a long way. I never saw such big ugly stones before; they came out of the earth, some of them, and some looked as if they had been rolled to where they were, and they went on and on as far as I could see, a long, long way. I looked out from them and saw the country, but it was strange. It was winter time, and there were black terrible woods hanging from the hills all round; it was like seeing a large room hung with black curtains, and the shape of the trees seemed different from any I had ever seen before. I was afraid. Then beyond the woods there were other hills round in a great ring, but I had never seen any of them; it all looked black, and everything had a voor over it. It was all so still and silent, and the sky was heavy and grey and sad, like a wicked voorish dome in Deep Dendo. I went on into the dreadful rocks. There were hundreds and hundreds of them. Some were like horrid grinning men; I could see their faces as if they would jump at me out of the stone, and catch hold of me, and drag me with them back into the rock, so that I should always be there. And there were other rocks that were like animals, creeping, horrible animals, putting out their tongues, and others were like words that I could not say,



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and others like dead people lying on the grass. I went on among them, though they frightened me, and my heart was full of wicked songs that they put into it; and I wanted to make faces and twist myself about in the way they did, and I went on and on a long way till at last I liked the rocks, and they didn't frighten me any more. I sang the songs I thought of; songs full of words that must not be spoken or written down. Then I made faces like the faces on the rocks, and I twisted myself about like the twisted ones, and I lay down flat on the ground like the dead ones, and I went up to one that was grinning, and put my arms round him and hugged him. And so I went on and on through the rocks till I came to a round mound in the middle of them. It was higher than a mound, it was nearly as high as our house, and it was like a great basin turned upside down, all smooth and round and green, with one stone, like a post, sticking up at the top. I climbed up the sides, but they were so steep I had to stop or I should have rolled all the way down again, and I should have knocked against the stones at the bottom, and perhaps been killed. But I wanted to get up to the very top of the big round mound, so I lay down flat on my face, and took hold of the grass with my hands and drew myself up, bit by bit, till I was at the top. Then I sat down on the stone in the middle, and looked all round about. I felt I had come such a long, long way, just as if I were a hundred miles from home, or in some other country, or in one of the strange places I had read about in the *Tales of the Genie* and the *Arabian Nights*, or as if I had gone across the sea, far away, for years and I had found another world that nobody had ever seen or heard of before, or as if I had somehow flown through the sky and fallen on one of the stars I had read about where everything is dead and cold and grey, and there is no air, and the wind doesn't blow. I sat on the stone and looked

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all round and round and round about me. It was just as if I was sitting on a tower in the middle of a great empty town, because I could see nothing all around but the grey rocks on the ground. I couldn't make out their shapes any more, but I could see them on and on for a long way, and I looked at them, and they seemed as if they had been arranged into patterns and shapes and figures. I knew they couldn't be, because I had seen a lot of them coming right out of the earth, joined to the deep rocks below, so I looked again, but still I saw nothing but circles, and small circles inside big ones, and pyramids, and domes, and spires, and they seemed to go round and round the place where I was sitting, and the more I looked, the more I saw great big rings of rocks, getting bigger and bigger, and I stared so long that it felt as if they were all moving and turning, like a great wheel, and I was turning, too, in the middle. I got quite dizzy and queer in the head, and everything began to be hazy and not clear, and I saw little sparks of blue light, and the stones looked as if they were springing and dancing and twisting as they went round and round and round. I was frightened again, and I cried out loud and jumped up from the stone I was sitting on and fell down. When I got up I was so glad they all looked still, and I sat down on the top and slid down the mound and went on again. I danced as I went in the peculiar way the rocks had danced when I got giddy, and I was so glad I could do it quite well, and I danced and danced along, and sang extraordinary songs that came into my head. At last I came to the edge of that great flat hill, and there were no more rocks, and the way went again through a dark thicket in a hollow. It was just as bad as the other one I went through climbing up, but I didn't mind this one, because I was so glad I had seen those singular dances and could imitate them. I went down, creeping through the bushes, and a tall nettle stung

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me on my leg, and made me burn, but I didn't mind it, and I tingled with the boughs and the thorns, but I only laughed and sang. Then I got out of the thicket into a close valley, a little secret place like a dark passage that nobody ever knows of, because it was so narrow and deep and the woods were so thick round it. There is a steep bank with trees hanging over it, and there the ferns keep green all through the winter, when they are dead and brown upon the hill, and the ferns there have a sweet, rich smell like what oozes out of fir trees. There was a little stream of water running down this valley, so small that I could easily step across it. I drank the water with my hand, and it tasted like bright, yellow wine, and it sparkled and bubbled as it ran down over beautiful red and yellow and green stones, so that it seemed alive and all colours at once. I drank it, and I drank more with my hand, but I couldn't drink enough, so I lay down and bent my head and sucked the water up with my lips. It tasted much better drinking it that way, and a ripple would come up to my mouth and give me a kiss, and I laughed, and drank again, and pretended there was a nymph, like the one in the old picture at home, who lived in the water and was kissing me. So I bent low down to the water, and put my lips softly to it, and whispered to the nymph that I would come again. I felt sure it could not be common water, I was so glad when I got up and went on; and I danced again and went up and up the valley, under hanging hills. And when I came to the top, the ground rose up in front of me, tall and steep as a wall, and there was nothing but the green wall and the sky. I thought of "for ever and for ever, world without end, Amen"; and I thought I must have really found the end of the world, because it was like the end of everything, as if there could be nothing at all beyond, except the kingdom of Voor, where the light goes when it is put out, and the water goes

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when the sun takes it away. I began to think of all the long, long way I had journeyed, how I had found a brook and followed it, and followed it on, and gone through bushes and thorny thickets, and dark woods full of creeping thorns. Then I had crept up a tunnel under trees, and climbed a thicket, and seen all the grey rocks and sat in the middle of them when they turned round, and then I had gone on through the grey rocks and come down the hill through the stinging thicket and up the dark valley, all a long, long way. I wondered how I should get home again, if I could ever find the way, and if my home was there any more, or if it were turned and everybody in it into grey rocks, as in the *Arabian Nights*. So I sat down on the grass and thought what I should do next. I was tired and my feet were hot with walking, and as I looked about I saw there was a wonderful well just under the high steep wall of grass. All the ground round it was covered with bright, green, dripping moss; there was every kind of moss there, moss like beautiful little ferns, and like palms and fir trees, and it was all green as jewelery, and drops of water hung on it like diamonds. And in the middle was the great well, deep and shining and beautiful, so clear that it looked as if I could touch the red sand at the bottom, but it was far below. I stood by it and looked in, as if I were looking in a glass. At the bottom of the well, in the middle of it, the red grains of sand were moving and stirring all the time, and I saw how the water bubbled up, but at the top it was quite smooth, and full and brimming. It was a great well, large like a bath, and with the shining, glittering green moss about it, it looked like a great white jewel, with green jewels all round. My feet were so hot and tired, that I took off my boots and stockings, and let my feet down into the water, and the water was soft and cold, and when I got down I wasn't tired any more, and I felt I must go on,

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farther and farther, and see what was on the other side of the wall. I climbed up it very slowly, going sideways all the time, and when I got to the top and looked over, I was in the queerest country I had seen, stranger even than the hill of the grey rocks. It looked as if earth-children had been playing there with their spades, as it was all hills and hollows, and castles and walls made of earth and covered with grass. There were two mounds like big beehives, round and great and solemn, and then hollow basins, and then a steep mounting wall like the ones I saw once by the seaside where the big guns and the soldiers were. I nearly fell into one of the round hollows, it went away from under my feet so suddenly, and I ran fast down the side and stood at the bottom and looked up. There was nothing but the grey, heavy sky and the sides of the hollow; everything else had gone away, and the hollow was the whole world, and I thought that at night it must be full of ghosts and moving shadows and pale things when the moon shone down to the bottom at the dead of the night, and the wind wailed up above. It was so strange and solemn and lonely, like a hollow temple of dead heathen gods. It reminded me of a tale my nurse had told me when I was quite little; it was the same nurse that took me into the wood where I saw the beautiful white people. And I remembered how nurse had told me the story one winter night, when the wind was beating the trees against the wall, and crying and moaning in the nursery chimney. She said there was, somewhere or other, a hollow pit, just like the one I was standing in, everybody was afraid to go into it or near it, it was such a bad place. But once upon a time there was a poor girl who said she would go into the hollow pit, and everybody tried to stop her, but she would go. And she went down into the pit and came back laughing, and said there was nothing there at all, except green grass and red



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stones, and white stones and yellow flowers. And soon after people saw she had most beautiful emerald earrings and they asked her how she got them, as she and her mother were quite poor. But she laughed, and said her earrings were not made of emeralds at all, but only of green grass. Then, one day, she wore on her breast the reddest ruby that any one had ever seen, and it was as big as a hen's egg, and glowed and sparkled like a hot burning coal of fire. And they asked how she got it, as she and her mother were quite poor. But she laughed, and said it was not a ruby at all, but only a red stone. Then one day she wore round her neck the loveliest necklace that any one had ever seen, much finer than the queen's finest, and it was made of great bright diamonds, hundreds of them, and they shone like all the stars on a night in June. So they asked her how she got it, as she and her mother were quite poor. But she laughed, and said they were not diamonds at all, but only white stones. And one day she went to the Court, and she wore on her head a crown of pure angel-gold, so nurse said, and it shone like the sun, and it was much more splendid than the crown the king was wearing himself, and in her ears she wore the emeralds and the big ruby was the brooch on her breast, and the great diamond necklace was sparkling on her neck. And the king and queen thought she was some great princess from a long way off, and got down from their thrones and went to meet her, but somebody told the king and queen who she was, and that she was quite poor. So the king asked why she wore a gold crown, and how she got it, as she and her mother were so poor. And she laughed and said it wasn't a crown at all, but only some yellow flowers she had put in her hair. And the king thought it was very strange, and said she should stay at the Court, and they would see what would happen next. And she was so lovely that everybody said her

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eyes were greener than the emeralds, her lips redder than the ruby, and her skin whiter than the diamonds and that her hair was brighter than the golden crown. So the king's son said he would marry her, and the king said he might. And the bishop married them, and there was a great supper, and afterwards the king's son went to his wife's room. But just when he had his hand on the door, he saw a tall black man, with a dreadful face, standing in front of the door, and a voice said—

*“Venture not upon your life,  
This is mine own wedded wife.”*

Then the king's son fell down on the ground in a fit. And they came and tried to get into the room, but they couldn't, and they hacked at the door with hatchets, but the wood had turned hard as iron, and at last everybody ran away, they were so frightened at the screaming and laughing and shrieking and crying that came out of the room. But next day they went and found there was nothing in the room but thick, black smoke, because the black man had come and taken her away. And on the bed were two knots of faded grass and a red stone, and some white stones, and some faded yellow flowers. I remembered this tale of nurse's while I was standing at the bottom of the deep hollow; it was so strange and solitary there and I felt afraid. I could not see any stones or flowers, but I was afraid of bringing them away without knowing, and I thought I would do a charm that came into my head to keep the black man away. So I stood right in the very middle of the hollow, and I made sure that I had none of those things on me, and then I walked round the place, and touched my eyes, and my lips, and my hair in a peculiar manner, and whispered some queer words that nurse taught me to keep bad things away.

Then I felt safe and climbed up out of the hollow, and went on through all those mounds and hollows and walls, till I came to the end, which was high above all the rest, and I could see that all the different shapes of the earth were arranged in patterns, something like the grey rocks, only the pattern was different. It was getting late, and the air was indistinct, but it looked from where I was standing like two great figures of people lying on the grass. And I went on, and at last I found a certain wood, which is too secret to be described, and nobody knows of the passage into it, which I found out in a very curious manner, by seeing some little animal run into the wood through it. So I went after the animal by a narrow dark way, under thorns and bushes, and it was almost dark when I came to a kind of open place in the middle. And there I saw the most wonderful sight I have ever seen, but it was only for a minute, as I ran away directly, and crept out of the wood by the passage I had come by, and ran and ran fast as ever I could, because I was afraid, what I had seen was so wonderful and so strange and beautiful. But I wanted to get home and think of it, and I did not know what might not happen if I stayed by the wood. I was hot all over and trembling, and my heart was beating, and strange cries that I could not help came from me as I ran from the wood. I was glad that a great white moon came up from over a round hill and showed me the way, so I went back through the mounds and hollows and down the close valley, and up through the thicket over the place of the great rocks, and so at last I got home again. My father was busy in his study, and the servants had not told about my not coming home, though they were frightened and wondered what they ought to do, so I told them I had lost my way, but I did not let them find out the real way I had been. I went to bed and lay awake all night, thinking of what I had seen. When I came out

## THE CHILD'S STORY

of the narrow way, and it looked all shining, though the air was dark, it seemed so certain, and all the way home I was quite sure that I had seen it, and I wanted to be alone in my room, and be glad over it all to myself, and shut my eyes and pretend it was there, and do all the things I would have done if I had not been so afraid. But when I shut my eyes the sight would not come, and I began to think about my adventures all over again, and I remembered how dusky and queer it was at the end, and I was afraid it must be all a mistake, because it seemed impossible it could happen.

# THE VOICE

By ZONA GALE

**B**ASSET had engaged passage on the *Titanic*, for her first crossing. Anyone sailing at that time would have done the same, providing he could still get passage. Basset was delighted at the promise of the swift, luxurious voyage, and he said to his friends:

"I'm off—on the *Titanic*—yes. Better come along."

He cabled his fiancée and his firm, said his farewells and did his final shopping.

He was walking in Regent Street when he first became aware of a faint impulse within him, less than a force, more than a fragrance; an impulse to cancel his passage. At first he did not notice, and when this urge did break through to his consciousness, he understood that it had been beating at him for a long time. As soon as it was definitely noticed, it became a clear and clamorous command.

He argued the matter with this inner disturber. Cancellation was impossible. His arrangements were all made, invitations had been refused, his cables had been sent, and Marie would be counting the days. There was now no earlier boat and he was averse to all postponements. In reply to all this came three distinct words:

"Cancel your passage."

Now Basset was accustomed to obey this inner impulse. He hadn't an idea what it was, and in general he thought if you classified a thing you had disposed of it.

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From *Yellow Gentians and Blue*, by Zona Gale, copyright, 1927, by D Appleton and Company.



## THE VOICE

But though he called this voice the subconscious, he continued to obey it, secretly and blindly, but pretty consistently. And the more often he obeyed it the more pressing it became, until, as now, having listened, he could not dismiss it.

So he cancelled his passage, sent off two more cables, and tucked himself into the cabin of an old liner sailing a day later. He was on the deck of this old liner when he was told of the message from the *Carpathia*, crying the *Titanic's* fate.

Shaken by the disaster, he was yet kindled by the memory of what had occurred. He had been saved—but how? Unquestionably he could not be the only one to whom this saving voice had spoken. There must be people on this very boat. . . .

He went among the passengers and asked them, nakedly, if they had had a like experience. From a passenger list of seventy, he found six who had taken passage and given it up for a similar reason and eleven who had thus been prevented from taking passage at all.

"Then why," he shouted to a woman who had held her *Titanic* passage for a month, "why were *they* not given this impulse—the people who sailed?"

"Perhaps they were," said this woman, "and they didn't listen."

When his boat had docked and he kissed Marie, exceedingly smart and very tender, she cried: "Oh my darling—thank God you changed your passage. How did you come to do that?"

Basset told her, reluctantly, feeling a sense of exposure. At once upon her arrival at home she repeated the story to her family, in his presence. At dinner that night she made him tell it again. The newspapers came and interviewed him on it, and then his firm associates questioned him minutely—"No, but just exactly how did the

voice sound?"—and at his club they made him tell it again and again, and there they began to joke him about it.

A woman's association asked him to come and speak informally on his wonderful, wonderful metaphysic experience, and he was drawn into an acceptance; and goaded too far by their awe, he informed them that this was the most usual thing in the world; that he had been obeying this inner voice for years, and that they could all do the same if they were not too battered by—"by tea and cakes," he told them rudely.

"But what *is* it?" they wanted to know.

"It's conscience," he said bluntly, "working as it was intended to work. Also, it's electricity. If we could raise our consciousness high enough, we'd always have this kind of thing. . . ."

Now the scientists attacked him and demanded to know what on earth he meant by electricity; and the psychologists what on earth he meant by higher consciousness and universal substance; and the theologists what on earth he meant by dragging conscience into the routine of the market-place. The weekly reviews and the headlines took up and tossed about Basset and his inner voice. He thought: "I shall lose my power. It is not that they have cut my hair. All the same, they have shorn me."

He fled to a mountain camp and one day went out alone in a canoe on a mountain lake. As he pushed off, he distinctly divined an agonized command not to step into the canoe. It upset, in the green and glossy water. A guide heard his cries and came running and shouting as the waters closed over Basset's head.

# NOT ON THE PASSENGER LIST

By BARRY PAIN

I HAD not slept. It may have been the noise which prevented me. The entire ship groaned, creaked, screamed and sobbed. In the staterooms near mine the flooring was being torn up, and somebody was busy with a very blunt saw just over my head—at least it sounded like that. The motion, too, was not favourable for sleep. There was nothing but strong personal magnetism to keep me in my bunk. If I had relaxed it for a moment I should have fallen out.

Then the big trunk under my berth began to be busy, and I switched on the light to look at it. In a slow and portly way it began to lollop across the floor towards the door. It was trying to get out of the ship, and I never blamed it. But before it could reach the door, a suit-case dashed out from under the couch and kicked it in the stomach. I switched off the light again, and let them fight it out in the dark.

I recalled that an elderly pessimist in the smoking-room the night before had expressed his belief that we were overloaded and that if the ship met any heavy weather she'd break in two for sure. And then I was playing chess with a fat negress who said she was only black when she was playing the black pieces; but in the middle of it somebody knocked and said that my bath was ready.

The last part turned out to be true. My bath was even more than ready—it was impatient; as I entered the bathroom the water jumped out to meet me. Then when the bath and I had finished with each other, my steward came slanting down the passage, at an angle of thirty degrees

to the floor, without spilling my morning tea, and said the weather was improving.

There were very few early risers at breakfast that morning, but I was not the first. Mrs. Derrison was coming out as I entered the saloon. I thought she looked ill, but it was not particularly surprising. We said good morning, and then she hesitated for a moment.

"I want to speak to you," she said. "Do you mind? Not now. Come up on deck when you've finished breakfast."

She was not an experienced traveller, and had already consulted me about various small matters. I supposed she wanted to know what was the right tip for the stewardess or something of that kind. Accordingly after breakfast I went up, and found her wrapped in furs—very expensive furs—in her deck-chair. I could see now that she was not in the least sea-sick, but she said she had not slept all night. I moved her chair into a better position, and chatted as I wrapped the rug round her. I confessed that with the exception of an hour's nightmare about a fat negress, I also had not slept. As a rule, she would have smiled at this, for she smiled easily and readily. But now she stared out over the sea as if she heard the words without understanding them. She was a woman of thirty-four or five, I should think, and had what is generally called an interesting face. You noticed her eyes particularly.

"Well," I said, "the wind's dropping, and we shall all sleep better tonight. Look, there's the sun coming out at last. And now, what's the trouble? What can I do for you?"

"I don't think that even you can help," she said drearily, "though you have done lots of kind things for me. Still, I've got to tell somebody. I simply can't stand it alone. Oh, if I were only the captain of this ship."

## NOT ON THE PASSENGER LIST

"I don't think you'd like it. Why, what would you do?"

"Turn round and go back to New York."

"It couldn't be done. The ship doesn't carry enough coal. And we shall be at Liverpool the morning after next. But why? What's the matter?"

She held out one hand in the sunlight. It looked very small and transparent. It shook.

"The matter is that I'm frightened. I'm simply frightened out of my life."

I looked hard at her. There was no doubt about it. She was a badly frightened woman. I resisted an impulse to pat her on the shoulder.

"But really, Mrs. Derrison, if you'll forgive me for saying so, this is absolute nonsense. The boat's slower than she ought to be, and I'll admit that she rolls pretty badly, but she's as safe as a church all the same."

"Yes, I know. In any case, that is not the kind of thing that would frighten me. This is something quite different. And when I have told you it, you will probably think that I am insane."

"No," I said, "I shall not think that."

"Very well. I told you that I was a widow. I wear no mourning, and I did not tell you that Alec, my husband, died only three months ago. Nor did I tell you, which is also the truth, that I am going to England in order to marry another man."

"I understand all that. Go on."

"Alec died three months ago. But he is on this boat. I saw him last night. I think he has come for me."

She made that amazing statement quietly and without excitement. But you cannot tell a ghost-story convincingly to a man who is sitting in the sun at half-past nine in the morning. I neither doubted her sincerity nor her sanity. I merely wondered how the illusion had been produced.



## 26 MYSTERY STORIES

"Well," I said, "you know that's quite impossible, don't you?"

"Yesterday, I should have said so."

"So you will tomorrow. Tell me how it happened, and I will tell you the explanation."

"I went to my room at eleven last night. The door was a little way open—fixed by that hook arrangement—the way I generally leave it. I switched on the light and went in. He was sitting on the berth with his legs dangling, his profile towards me. He wore blue pyjamas and red slippers—the kind that he always wore. The pocket of the coat was weighed down, and I remembered what he had told me—that when travelling he put his watch, money, and keys there at night. He turned his head towards me. It came round very slowly, as if with an effort. That was strange, because so far I had been startled and surprised, but not frightened. When the head turned round, I became really frightened. You see, it was Alec—and yet it was not."

"I don't think I understand. How do you mean?"

"Well, it was like him—a roundish face, clean-shaven, heavily lined—he was fifteen years older than I was—with his very heavy eyebrows and his ridiculously small mouth. His mouth was really abnormal. But the whole thing looked as if it had been modelled out of wax and painted. And, then, when a head turns towards you, you expect the eyes to look at you. These did not. They remained with the lids half down—very much as I remembered him after the doctors had gone. Oh, I was frightened! I fumbled with one hand behind me, trying to find the bell-push. And yet I could not help speaking out loud. I said: 'What does this mean, Alec?' Just then I got my finger on the bell-push. He knew I had rung—I could see that. His lips kept opening and shutting as if he were trying hard to speak. When the voice came at last, it

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was only a whisper. He said: 'I want you!' Then the stewardess tapped at the door, and I did not see him any more."

"Did you tell the stewardess?"

"Oh, no! I did not mean to tell anybody then. I pretended to be nervous about the ship rolling too much, and managed to keep her with me for a long time. She offered to fetch the doctor for me, so that I could ask him for a sleeping-draught, but I wouldn't have that."

"Why not?"

"I was afraid to go to sleep. I wanted to be ready in case—in case it happened again. You see, I knew why it was."

"I don't think you did, Mrs. Derrison. But I will tell you why it was, if you like. The explanation is very simple and also very prosaic."

"What was it?"

"The cause of the illusion was merely sea-sickness."

"But I've not felt ill at all."

"Very likely not. If you had been ill in the ordinary way, the way in which it has taken a good many of our friends, you would never have had the illusion. Brain and stomach act and react on one another. The motion of the boat, too, is particularly trying to the optic nerves. In some cases, not very common perhaps, but quite well known and recognised—it is the brain and not the other organ which is temporarily affected."

I do not know anything about it really, and had merely invented the sea-sickness theory on the spur of the moment. It was necessary to think of something plausible and very commonplace. Mrs. Derrison was suffering a good deal, and I had to stop it.

"If I could only think that," she said, "what a comfort it would be."

"Whether you believe it or not, it's the truth," I said.

## 26 MYSTERY STORIES

"I've known a similar case. It won't happen to you again, because the weather's getting better, and so you won't be ill."

She wanted to know all about the "similar case," and I made up a convincing little story about it. Gradually, she began to be reassured.

"I wish I had known about it before," she said. "All last night I sat in my room, with the light turned on, getting more and more frightened. I don't think there's anything hurts one so much as fear. I can understand people being driven mad by it. You see, I had a special reason to be afraid, because Alec was jealous, very jealous. He had even, I suppose, some grounds for jealousy."

She began to tell me her story. She had married Alec Derrison nine years before. She liked him at that time, but she did not love him, and she told him so. He said it did not matter, and that in time she would come to love him. I dare say a good many marriages that begin in that way turn out happily, but this marriage was a mistake.

He took her to his house in New York, and there they lived for a year without actual disaster. He was very kind to her, and she was touched by his kindness. She had been quite poor, and she now had plenty of money to spend, and liked it. But it became clear to her in that year not only that she did not love her husband, but that she never would love him. And she was, I could believe, a rather romantic and temperamental kind of woman, by whom many men were greatly attracted. Alec Derrison began to be very jealous—at that time quite absurdly and without reason.

At the end of the year Derrison took her to Europe for a holiday. And there, in England, in her father's country rectory, she met the man whom she ought to have married—an artist of the same age as herself. The two fell desperately in love with one another. The man

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wanted to take her away with him and ultimately marry her. She refused.

There is a curious mixture of conscience and temperament which is sometimes mistaken for cowardice, and is often accompanied by extraordinary courage. She went to her husband and, so to speak, put her cards down on the table. "I love another man," she said. "I love him in the way in which I wished to love you but cannot. I did not want this and I did not look for it, but it has happened to me. I am sorry it has happened, but I do not ask you to forgive me, for you have nothing to forgive. I want to know what you mean to do."

His answer was to take her straight back to New York. There for the eight years before he died, he treated her with kindness and gave her every luxury, but all the time he had her watched. Traps were laid for her, but in vain. He had for business reasons to go to England every year, but he never took her with him. When he was away, two of his sisters came to the house and watched for him.

And yet, because in some things a woman is cleverer than a man, and also because the feminine conscience always has its limitations, during the whole of those eight years she corresponded regularly with the other man without being found out. They never met, but she had his letters. And now she was going back to marry him.

It was, perhaps, a little curious that she should tell all this to a man whom she had known only a few days. But intimacies grow quickly on board ship, and besides she wanted to explain her terror.

"You see how it was," she said. "If a dead man could come back again then certainly he would come back. And when one begins to be frightened the fear grows and grows. One thinks of things. For instance, he crossed more than once in this very boat—I thought of that."

"Well, Mrs. Derrison," I said, "the dead cannot and do

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not come back. But a disordered interior does sometimes produce an optical illusion. That's all there is to it. However, if you like, I'll go to the purser and get your room changed for another; I can manage that all right."

It was not a very wise suggestion, and she refused it. She said it would be like admitting that there was something in it beyond sea-sickness.

"Good!" I said. "I think you are quite right. I thought it might ease your mind not to see again the room where you were frightened, but it is much better to be firm about it. In fact, you had better take a cup of soup and then go back to your room now, and get an hour's sleep before lunch."

"I wonder if I could."

"Of course, you can. You're getting your colour back, and there's much less motion on the boat. You won't have another attack. You've had a sort of suppressed form of sea-sickness, that's all. And I can quite understand that it scared you at the time, when you didn't know; but there's no reason why it should scare you now when you do know."

She took my advice. A woman will generally take advice from any man except her husband—because he's the only man she really knows. She was disproportionately grateful. Gratitude is rare, but, when found, it is in very large streaks. She had also decided to believe that I knew everything, could do everything, and had other admirable qualities. When a woman decides to believe, facts do not hamper her.

She was much better at lunch and afterwards. Next day she was apparently normal, and was taking part in the usual deck-games. I began to think that my sea-sickness theory might have been a lucky shot. I consulted the ship's doctor about it, without giving him names or details, but he was noncommittal. He was a general



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practitioner, of course, and I was taking him into the specialist regions. Besides, naturally enough, a doctor does not care to talk his own shop with a layman. He gave me an impression that any conclusions to which I came would necessarily be wrong. But it did not worry me much. I did not see a great deal of Mrs. Derrison, but it was obvious that she had recovered her normal health and spirits. I believed that the trouble was over.

But it was not.

On the night before we arrived, after the smoking-room had been closed, old Bartlett asked me to come to his rooms for a chat and a whisky-and-soda. The old man slept badly, and was inclined to a late sitting. We discussed various subjects, and amongst them memory for faces.

"I've got that memory," he said. "Names bother me, but not faces. For instance, I remember the faces of the seventy or eighty in the first class here."

"I thought we were more than that."

"No. People don't cross the Atlantic for fun in February. It's a pretty light list. It's a funny thing, too—we've got one man on board who's never showed up at all. I saw him for the first time this morning—to be accurate yesterday morning—coming from the bath, and I've not seen him since. He must have been hiding in his stateroom all the time."

"Ill, probably."

"No, not ill. I asked the doctor. I suppose he don't enjoy the society of his fellow-men for some reason or other."

"Well, now," I said, "let's test your memory. What was he like?"

"You've given me an easy one, as it happens, for he was rather a curious chap to look at, and easy to remember in consequence. A man in the fifties, I should say; medium

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height; wore blue pyjamas with a gold watch-chain trickling out of the pocket, and those red slippers that you buy in Cairo. But his face was what I noticed particularly. He's got a one-inch mouth—smallest mouth I ever saw on a man. But the whole look on his face was queer, just as if it had been painted and then varnished.

"He was bald, round-faced, wrinkled, and clean-shaven. He walked very slowly, and he looked as if he were worried out of his life. There's the Portrait, and you can check it when we get off the boat—you are bound to see him then."

"Yes, you've a good memory. If I had just passed a man in a passage I shouldn't have remembered a thing about him ten minutes afterwards. By the way, have you spoken about the hermit passenger to anybody else?"

"No. Oh, yes, I did mention it to some of the ladies after dinner! Why?"

"I wondered if anybody besides yourself had seen him?"

"Well, they didn't say they had. Bless you, I've known men like that. It is a sort of sulkiness. They'd sooner be alone."

A few minutes later I said good-night and left him. It was between one and two in the morning. His story had made a strong impression upon me. My theory of seasickness had to go, and I was scared. Quite frankly, I was afraid of meeting something in blue pyjamas. But I was more afraid about Mrs. Derrison. There were very few ladies on board, and it was almost certain she was in the group to whom Bartlett had told his story. If that were so, anything might have happened. I decided to go past her stateroom, listening as I did so. But before I reached her room the door opened, and she swung out in her nightdress. She had got her mouth open and one hand at her throat. With the other hand she clutched

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the handle of the door, as if she were trying to hold it shut against somebody. I hurried towards her, and she turned and saw me. In an instant she was in my arms, clinging to me in sheer, mad, helpless terror.

She was hysterical, of course, but fortunately she did not make much noise. She kept saying: "I've got to go back to him—into the sea!" It seemed a long time before I could get her calm enough to listen to me.

"You've had a bad dream, and it has frightened you, poor child."

"No, no. Not a dream!"

"It didn't seem like one to you, but that's what it was. You're all right now. I'm going to take care of you."

"Don't let go of me for a moment. He wants me. He's in there."

"Oh, no! I'll show you that he's not there."

I opened the door. Within all was darkness. I still kept one arm round her or she would have fallen.

"I left the light on," she whispered.

"Yes," I said, "but your sleeve caught the switch as you came out. I saw it!" It was a lie, of course, but one had to lie.

I switched the light on again. The room was empty. There were the tumbled bedclothes on the berth, and a pillow had fallen to the floor. On the table some toilet things gleamed brightly. There was a pile of feminine garments on the couch. I drew her in and closed the door.

"I'll put you back into bed again," I said, "if you don't mind."

"If you'll promise not to go."

"Oh, I won't go."

I picked her up and laid her on the berth, and drew the clothes over her. I put the pillow back under her head. With both her hands she clutched one of mine.

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"Now, then," I said, "do you happen to have any brandy here?"

"In a flask in my dressing-bag. It's been there for years. I don't know if it's any good still."

She seemed reluctant to let go my hand, and clutched it again eagerly when I brought the brandy. She was quite docile, and drank as I told her. I have not put down half of what she said. She was muttering the whole time. The phrase "into the sea" occurred frequently. All ordinary notions of the relationship of a man and a woman had vanished. I was simply a big brother who was looking after her. That was felt by both of us. We called each other "dear" that night frequently, but there was not a trace of sex-sentimentality between us.

Gradually she became more quiet, and I was no longer afraid that she would faint. Still holding my hand, she said:

"Shall I tell you what it was?"

"Yes, dear, if you like. But you needn't. It was only a dream, you know."

"I don't think it was a dream. I went to sleep, which I had never expected to do after the thing that Mr. Bartlett told us. I couldn't have done it, only I argued that you must be right and the rest must be just a coincidence. Then I was awakened by the sound of somebody breathing close by my ear. It got further away, and I switched on the light quickly. He was standing just there—exactly as I described him to you—and he had picked up a pair of nail-scissors. He was opening and shutting them. Then he put them down, and shook his head. (Look, they're open now and I always close them.) And suddenly he lurched over, almost falling, and clutched the wooden edge of the berth. His red hands—they were terribly red, far redder than they used to be—came on to the wood with a slap, 'Go into the sea, Sheila,' he whis-

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pered. 'I'm waiting. I want you.' And after that I don't know what happened, but suddenly I was hanging on to you, dear. How long was it ago? Was it an hour? It doesn't matter. I'm safe while you're here."

I released her hands gently. Suddenly the paroxysm of terror returned.

"You're not going?" she cried aghast.

"Of course not." I sat down on the couch opposite her. "But what makes you think you are safe while I am here?"

"You're stronger than he is," she said.

She said it as if it were a self-evident fact which did not admit of argument. Certainly, though no doubt unreasonably, it gave me confidence. I felt somehow that he and I were fighting for the woman's life and soul, and I had got him down. I knew that in some mysterious way I was the stronger.

"Well," I said, "the dream that one is awake is a fairly common dream. But what was the thing that Bartlett told you?"

"He saw him—in blue pyjamas and red slippers. He mentioned the mouth, too."

"I'm glad you told me that," I said and began a few useful inventions. "The man that Bartlett saw was Curwen. We've just been talking about it."

"Who's Curwen?"

"Not a bad chap—an electrical engineer, I believe. As soon as Bartlett mentioned the mole on the cheek and the little black moustache I spotted that it was Curwen."

"But he said he had never seen him before."

"Nor had he. Curwen's a bad sailor and has kept to his stateroom—in fact, that was his first public appearance. But I saw Curwen when he first came on board and had a talk with him. As soon as Bartlett mentioned the mole, I knew who it was."



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"Then the colour of the slippers and—"

"They were merely a coincidence and a mighty unlucky one for you."

"I see," she said. Her muscles relaxed. She gave a little sigh of relief and sank back on the pillow. I was glad that I had invented Curwen and the mole.

I changed the subject now, and began to talk about Liverpool—not so many miles away now. I asked her if she had changed her American money yet. I spoke about the customs, and confessed to some successful smuggling that I had once done. In fact, I talked about anything that might take her mind away from her panic. Then I said:

"If you will give me about ten seconds start now, so that I can get back to my room, you might ring for your stewardess to come and take care of you. It will mean an extra tip for her and she won't mind."

"Yes," she said, "I ought not to keep you any longer. Indeed, it is very kind of you to have helped me and to have stayed so long. I'll never forget it. But even now I daren't be alone for a moment. Will you wait until she's actually here?"

I was not ready for that.

"Well," I said, hesitatingly.

"Of course," she said. "I hadn't thought of it. I can't keep you. You've had no sleep at all. And yet if you go, he'll—Oh, what am I to do? What am I to do?"

I was afraid she would begin to cry.

"That's all right," I said. "I can stay for another hour or two easily enough."

She was full of gratitude. She told me to throw the things off the end of the couch so that I could lie at full length. I dozed for a while, but I do not think she slept at all. She was wide awake when I opened my eyes. I

## NOT ON THE PASSENGER LIST

talked to her a little, and found her much reassured and calmed. People were beginning to move about. It was necessary for me to go immediately if I were not to be seen.

She agreed at once. When I shook hands with her, and told her to try for an hour's sleep, she kissed my hand fervently in a childish sort of way. Frightened people behave rather like children.

I was not seen as I came from her room. The luck was with me. It is just possible that on the other side of the ship a steward saw me enter my own room in evening clothes at a little after five. If he did it did not matter.

I have had the most grateful and kindly letters from her and from her new husband—the cheery and handsome man who met her at Liverpool. In her letter she speaks of her “awful nightmare, that even now seems sometimes as if it must have been real.” She has sent me a cigarette-case that I am afraid I cannot use publicly. A gold cigarette-case, with a diamond push button would give a wrong impression of my income, and the inscription inside might easily be misunderstood. But I like to have it.

Thanks to my innocent mendacity, she has a theory which covers the whole ground. But I myself have no theory at all. I know this—that I might travel to New York by that same boat tomorrow, and that I am waiting three days for another.

I have suppressed the name of the boat, and I think I have said nothing by which she could be identified. I do not want to spoil business. Besides, it may be funk and superstition that convinces me that on every trip she carries a passenger whose name is not on the list. But, for all that, I *am* quite convinced.

## THE INTERVAL

By VINCENT O'SULLIVAN

MRS. WALTON passed through a little alley leading from one of the gates which are around Regent's Park, and came out on the wide and quiet street. She walked along slowly, peering anxiously from side to side so as not to overlook the number. She pulled her furs closer round her; after her years in India, this London damp seemed very harsh. Still, it was not a fog today. A dense haze, grey and ruddy tinged, lay between the houses, sometimes blowing with a little wet kiss against the face. Mrs. Wilton's hair and eyelashes and her furs were powdered with tiny drops. But there was nothing in the weather to blur the sight; she could see the faces of people some distance off and read the signs on the shops.

Before the door of a dealer in antiques and second-hand furniture she paused and looked through the shabby uncleaned window at an unassorted heap of things, many of them of great value. She read the Polish name fastened on the pane in white letters.

"Yes, this is the place."

She opened the door, which met her entrance with an ill-tempered jangle. From somewhere in the black depths of the shop the dealer came forward. He had a clammy white face, with a sparse black beard, and wore a skull cap and spectacles. Mrs. Wilton spoke to him in a low voice.

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A look of complicity, of cunning, perhaps of irony, passed through the dealer's cynical and sad eyes. But he bowed gravely and respectfully.

"Yes, she is here, madam. Whether she will see you or not, I do not know. She is not always well. And then we have to be so careful. The police—not that they would touch a lady like you. But the poor alien has not much chance these days."

Mrs. Wilton followed him to the back of the shop, where there was a winding staircase. She knocked over a few things in her passage and stooped to pick them up, but the dealer kept muttering, "It does not matter—surely it does not matter." He lit a candle.

"You must go up these stairs. They are very dark; be careful. When you come to a door, open it and go straight in."

He stood at the foot of the stairs, holding the light high above his head, and she ascended.

The room was not very large, and it seemed very ordinary. There were some flimsy, uncomfortable chairs in gilt and red. Two large palms were in corners. Under a glass case on the table was a view of Rome. The room had not a business-like look, thought Mrs. Wilton; there was no suggestion of the office or waiting-room where people came and went all day; yet you would not say it was a private room which was lived in. There were no books or papers about; every chair was in the place in which it had been placed when the room was last swept; there was no fire and the room was very cold.

To the right of the window was a door covered with a plush curtain. Mrs. Wilton sat down near the door and watched this curtain. She thought it must be through that that the soothsayer would come forth. She laid her hands listlessly one on top of the other on the table. This must be the tenth seer she had consulted

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since Hugh had been killed. She thought them over. No, this must be the eleventh. She had forgotten that frightening man in Paris who said he had been a priest. Yet of them all it was only he who had told her anything definite. But even he could do no more than tell the past. He told her of her marriage; he even had the duration of it right—twenty-one months. He told, too, of their time in India—at least, he knew that her husband had been a soldier, and said he had been on service in the “colonies.” On the whole, though, he had been as unsatisfactory as the others. None of them had given her the consolation she sought. She did not want to be told of the past. If Hugh was gone for ever, then with him had gone all her love of living, her courage, her better self. She wanted to be lifted out of the despair, the dazed aimless drifting from day to day, longing at night for the morning, and in the morning for the fall of night, which had been her life since his death. If somebody could assure her that it was not all over, that he was somewhere, not too far away, unchanged from what he had been here, with his crisp hair, and rather slow smile and lean brown face, that he saw her sometimes, that he had not forgotten her. . . .

“Oh, Hugh, darling!”

When she looked up again, the woman was sitting there before her. Mrs. Wilton had not heard her come in. With her experience, wide enough now, of seers and fortune-tellers of all kinds, she saw at once that this woman was different from the others. She was used to the quick appraising look, the attempts, sometimes clumsy, but often cleverly disguised, to collect some fragments of information, whereon to erect a plausible vision. But this woman looked as if she took it out of herself.

Not that her appearance suggested intercourse with the spiritual world more than the others had done; it



## THE INTERVAL

suggested that, in fact, considerably less. Some of the others had been frail, yearning, evaporated creatures, and the ex-priest in Paris had had something terrible and condemned in his look. He might well sup with the devil, that man, and probably did in some way or other.

But this was a little fat, weary-faced woman about fifty, who only did not look like a cook because she looked more like a seamstress. Her black dress was sprinkled with white threads. Mrs. Wilton looked at her in some embarrassment. It seemed more reasonable to be asking a woman like this about altering a gown than about intercourse with the dead. That even seemed absurd in such a very commonplace presence. The woman appeared timid and oppressed; she breathed heavily and kept rubbing her dingy hands, which looked moist, one over the other; she was always wetting her lips, and coughed with a little dry cough. But in her these signs of nervous exhaustion suggested overwork in a close atmosphere, bending too close over the sewing machine. Her uninteresting hair, like a rat's pelt, was eked out with a false addition of another colour. Some threads had got into her hair, too. Her harried, uneasy look caused Mrs. Wilton to ask compassionately: "Are you much worried by the police?"

"Oh, the police! Why don't they leave us alone? You never know who comes to see you. Why don't they leave me alone? I'm a good woman. I only think. What I do is no harm to anyone. . . ."

She continued in an uneven querulous voice, always rubbing her hands together nervously. She seemed to the visitor to be talking at random, just gabbling, like children do sometimes before they fall asleep.

"I want to explain—" hesitated Mrs. Wilton.

But the woman with her head pressed close against the back of the chair, was staring beyond her at the wall.

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Her face had lost whatever little expression it had; it was blank and stupid. When she spoke it was very slowly and her voice was guttural.

"Can't you see him? It seems strange to me that you can't see him. He is so near you. He is passing his arm round your shoulders."

This was a frequent gesture of Hugh's. And indeed at that moment she felt that someone was very near her, bending over her. She was enveloped in tenderness. Only a very thin veil, she felt, prevented her from seeing. But the woman saw. She was describing Hugh minutely, even the little things such as the burn on his hand.

"Is he happy? Oh, ask him does he love me?"

The result was so far beyond anything she had hoped for that she was stunned. She could only stammer the first thing that came into her head. "Does he love me?"

"He loves you. He won't answer, but he loves you. He wants me to make you see him. He is disappointed, I think, because I can't. But I can't unless you do it yourself." After a while she said: "I think you will see him again. You think of nothing else. He is very close to us now."

Then she collapsed and fell into a heavy sleep and lay there motionless, hardly breathing. Mrs. Wilton put some notes on the table and stole out on tip-toe.

She seemed to remember that downstairs in the dark shop the dealer with the waxen face detained her to show her some old silver and jewelry and such like. She did not come to herself, she had no precise recollection of anything, till she found herself entering a church near Portland Place. It was an unlikely act in her normal moments. Why did she go in there? She acted like one walking in her sleep.

The church was old and dim, with high black pews.

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There was nobody there. Mrs. Wilton sat down in one of the pews and bent forward with her face in her hands.

After a few moments she saw that a soldier had come in noiselessly and placed himself about half-a-dozen rows ahead of her. He never turned round; but presently she was struck by something familiar in the figure. First she thought vaguely that the soldier looked like her Hugh. Then, when he put up his hand, she saw who it was.

She hurried out of the pew and ran towards him. "Oh, Hugh, Hugh, have you come back?"

He looked round with a smile. He had not been killed. It was all a mistake. He was going to speak. . . .

Footsteps sounded hollow in the empty church. She turned and glanced down the dim aisle.

It was an old sexton or verger who approached. "I thought I heard you call," he said.

"I was speaking to my husband." But Hugh was nowhere to be seen. "He was here a moment ago." She looked about in anguish. "He must have gone to the door."

"There's nobody here," said the old man gently. "Only you and me. Ladies are often taken funny since the war. There was one in here yesterday afternoon said she was married in this church and her husband had promised to meet her here. Perhaps you were married here?"

"No," said Mrs. Wilton, desolately. "I was married in India."

It might have been two or three days after that, when she went into a small Italian restaurant in the Bayswater district. She often went out for her meals now: she had an exhausting cough, and she found that it became less troublesome when she was in a public place looking at strange faces. In her flat were all the things Hugh had

used; the trunks and bags still had his name on them, with the labels of places where they had been together. They were like stabs. In the restaurant, people came and went, many soldiers, too, among them, just glancing at her in her corner.

This day, as it chanced, she was rather late and there was nobody there. She was very tired. She nibbled at the food they brought her. She could almost have cried from tiredness and loneliness and the ache in her heart. Then suddenly he was before her, sitting there opposite, at the table. It was as it was in the days of their engagement, when they used sometimes to lunch at restaurants. He was not in uniform. He smiled at her and urged her to eat, just as he used in those days. . . .

I met her that afternoon as she was crossing Kensington Gardens, and she told me about it.

"I have been with Hugh." She seemed most happy.

"Did he say anything?"

"N-no. Yes. I think he did, but I could not quite hear. My head was so very tired. The next time—"

I did not see her for some time after that. She found, I think, that by going to places where she had once seen him—the old church, the little restaurant—she was more certain to see him again. She never saw him at home. But in the street or the park he would often walk along beside her. Once he saved her from being run over. She said she actually felt his hand grabbing her arm, suddenly, when the car was nearly upon her.

She had given me the address of the clairvoyant; and it is through that strange woman that I know—or seem to know—what happened.

Mrs. Wilton was not exactly ill last winter, not so ill, at least, as to keep to her bedroom. But she was very thin, and her great handsome eyes always seemed to be

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staring at some point beyond, searching. There was a look in them that seamen's eyes sometimes have when they are drawing on a coast of which they are not very certain. She lived almost in solitude, she hardly ever saw anybody, except when they sought her out. To those who were anxious about her, she laughed and said she was very well.

One sunny morning she was lying awake, waiting for the maid to bring her tea. The shy London sunlight peeped through the blinds. The room had a fresh and happy look.

When she heard the door open she thought that the maid had come in. Then she saw that Hugh was standing at the foot of the bed. He was in uniform this time, and looked as he had looked the day he went away.

"Oh, Hugh, speak to me! Will you not say just one word?"

He smiled and threw back his head, just as he used to in the old days at her mother's house, when he wanted to call her out of the room without attracting the attention of the others. He moved towards the door, still signing to her to follow him. He picked up her slippers on the way and held them out to her as if he wanted her to put them on. She slipped out of bed, hastily. . . .

It is strange that when they came to look through her things after her death the slippers could never be found.



## PETER

By HERMON OULD

ONE day towards the end of July, 1924, I was calling on a friend (Mrs. Scott) to discuss a proposed visit to Cornwall when I learned that a sitting for spiritualistic phenomena had been arranged for that evening. Asked if I would join, I rather lightly agreed. It was still daylight, but as the sun sank we did not turn on the electric light and the sitting ultimately took place in comparative darkness. We sat round a small table, with our hands resting lightly on it, forming a joined circle. Throughout the séance we were talking and I (if not the four others) was inclined to laugh at the whole business.

Presently the table moved, tilting towards one of those present. We asked who was there and after many abortive attempts the name "Scott" was spelled out. (The method of communication was to say aloud the letters of the alphabet: one tilt—A, two tilts—B, and so on.)

On that occasion no message worth recording was received, and I came away with only one serious conviction: that the table had moved, apart from *my* conscious volition. Everyone present declared that the movement was independent of him or her; and I was willing to believe that they spoke the truth.

On mentioning the incident to a young man who lived in the flat above mine, he said he often had sittings with his wife and asked if I would care to join them sometime.

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I was sufficiently interested to avail myself of this second opportunity and on the thirtieth of July, sat again. This time a small bamboo table was used. To begin with I sat with my hands on the table, but after a few minutes my host, K., thought it might be better if I sat near, without actually touching the table. "If I were wanted I should be asked for."

Very quickly the table began to move and spelt out F-O-P. K. asked if these were initials, but the new-comer replied that Fop was his name. The following dialogue (abridged) took place:

"Whom have you come for?"

Fop: "Ould."

"Do you mean Hermon Ould?"

Fop: "Yes."

"Do you know him?"

Fop: "No."

"Do you want him to come to the table?"

Fop: "Yes."

I went to the table and asked: "Why did you come?"

Fop: "Wanted to. I help Ould."

"That's very kind—and you don't know me?"

Fop: "No."

"Is your real name Fop?"

Fop: "Yes. Nickname."

"Are you my guide?"

Fop: "No. Friend."

"Will you come to a sitting at Mrs. Scott's?"

Fop: "No."

"Where will you come?"

Fop: "Here."

"At any special time?"

Fop: "No, risk it."

The following Saturday I sat with the same company as before at Mrs. Scott's house. The table moved with

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considerable violence and I (still disposed to treat the matter with levity) laughed a good deal at its antics. "Scott" came again and gave messages of affection to his wife, and then we received the following warning:

"Defeat a leprechaun."

Even the sobered ones were moved to laughter by this injunction.

"What is a leprechaun?" we asked.

"A fairy."

"And why should we defeat it?"

"It will beset you."

"How can we defeat it?"

"To deal with wicked spirits, be on your guard."

"Who is it speaking?"

"Jim Rutter."

"Who is Jim Rutter?"

"A spirit."

And later on: "Be careful. Try another table."

On the ninth of August I went to Cornwall. During the first ten days very few attempts were made to hold séances, but chance decided us to try again. Scott came and I asked him if he could fetch a friend of mine, David Morris, who had died some years ago. He said he could and tilted out:

"Maurice will come tomorrow."

I interrupted to give the correct spelling of the name, "M-o-r-r-i-s."

Next evening Mrs. Scott and I sat, and this conversation took place:

"David."

"Where did you pass on, David?"

"Fighting in France."

"Then you are not the David I knew. He was never a soldier. Whom do you want?"

"Ould."

## PETER

"Do you know me?"

"No."

"Why did you come?"

"Scott. . . ."

"Are you David Morris?"

"No, David Norris. Very, very, sorry."

At this juncture I should like to ask those to whom the theory of sub-conscious action is the sole explanation of these phenomena to bear in mind that the persons sitting at the table were expecting, if anybody, David Morris, and that it would be a peculiar trick of the sub-conscious to invent a fictitious creature, unknown to itself and unable to deceive anybody present.

The next evening the table spelled out again: "David," and I repeated my question about the place of death. This time the correct answer "Carmarthen" was given. The dialogue which ensued was intelligible and the entity speaking through the table might easily have been my friend, David Morris. Asked what he was doing he replied: "They put me among the tired ones to lift them up with hope."

"David" came a number of times and on one occasion I asked him whether he could find out about a living friend of mine in Germany. I gave only the Christian name, "Peter," but "David" undertook to bring me news of him on the morrow.

For many years there has been a great bond of sympathy between me and "Peter," but for nine months I had been without word of him, and had grown anxious. Till this moment my scepticism had been maintained and I had approached every new phenomenon with an almost aggressively critical mind. To the end of the experiment I believe I was able to preserve this detachment, although confessedly willing to accept the manifestations *at the time of their occurrence* on their face value. I thought

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it right, in speaking to entities which claimed to be the spirits of departed friends and relatives, to be at least as polite and considerate as I should have been if they had appeared to me in the flesh.

To resume.

Next evening "David" spelled out his name. Then followed, with startling precision:

"Peter is dead."

"Where did he die?"

"Berlin."

"What did he die of?"

"Tubercle."

"Do you know when?"

"No."

But *when pressed*, the reply came: "Ten days ago."

"Can you bring him?"

"Yes. Tomorrow."

The next day, first of September, the first name spelled out was "Peter." After suitable preliminary remarks I asked (in German) why he had not written to me.

"Weil ich krank war" (Because I was ill).

I asked how long he had been ill and the reply (somewhat confused) was:

"Seit lange" (A long time).

"Have you any message for me?"

"Ich liebe Dich" (I love you).

". . . And what else?"

"Schreibe Mutter" (Write mother).

As it is chiefly with "Peter" that this account is concerned, I do not propose to record (except where relevant) messages from others. In those cases where I used German in speaking to him, I will give an English translation. But "Peter's" own replies I will give in the language he used. Every evening after the first manifestation "Peter"



## PETER

came. His first message was always "Ich liebe Dich," and his last was generally the same. On the ninth of September he asked, "Willst Du sagen ob Du mich liebst?" (Will you tell me if you love me?); and when asked by one of those present whether he would move the table about the room in order to convince the company that he was there he said: "Ich kann nicht verstehen warum Sie wollen das" (I cannot understand why you should wish that). His chief concern throughout these earlier sittings was to convince me of his continued affection, to assure himself of mine, and to urge me to get into touch with his mother. I asked *my* "mother" if she had met him. She replied that she had, that he was looking tired, but would soon recover.

On the eleventh of September, "Peter" asked again if I had written to his mother. I explained that I had written for word of him, but had naturally withheld news of his death. He seemed uneasy about this, but finally said: "Tus wie Du willst" (Do as you will). On that occasion his only other remark was "Gott ist liebe" (God is love).

From now onward, his messages were much fuller and the "tiredness" complained of seemed to have passed. I told him about a literary scheme of mine and he made intelligent, and not approving, remarks on it. Mrs. Scott asked if he knew what work I was doing and he replied, "Theaterstücke" (Plays). It now became clear that "Peter" knew exactly what I was doing and *thinking* during the day. An amusing incident occurred on one occasion when the maid brought in a duck for the morrow's lunch. I could not remember the German word for duck and asked "Peter" if he knew it. He was also stumped. I described the bird and he hazarded "Gans" (Goose). I searched my memory and recalled the cor-

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rect word and asked "Peter" if he could read my mind and spell it out on the table. Whereupon he spelt out "Ente."

The fourteenth of September I asked if it would not be possible for him to appear to me.

"Thoughts bring me," he replied.

"Yes, but could you not appear?"

"Too soon. Later."

He suggested that I should read the plays of George Kaiser. I asked which he considered the best of them and he replied, "Von Morgens bis Mitternachts." Asked for other suggestions, he recommended Franz Werfel's "Spiegelmensch." Mrs. Scott enquired about early German plays and he referred her to "Hans Sachs." A reference was made to the German playwright and poet, Heinrich von Kleist, and, knowing his work only very inadequately, I asked which of his plays was best worth reading.

" 'Ruprecht, Herzog von Preussen.' "

The fifteenth of September I told "Peter" that I was surprised I had not heard from his mother.

"She is writing, she knows I am dead."

"When shall I get the letter?"

"When you get home."

He told me that he had heard me singing the folk-song "Waly-waly" on the sea-coast and that he had *seen* my thoughts as I went to the post office. He gave a brief resumé of them.

I had asked my "mother" what manner of life "Peter" was going to lead "over there" and she surprised me by the statement that he was going to devote himself to me. I repeated the question to "Peter" and he replied: "God wants me to take care of you."

"Do you mean that you have seen God and consulted him?" I asked incredulously.

## PETER

"No. We long for God to work his will."

I said I was of opinion that no one person's job should be the looking after another, and he seemed to think that his reply "I love you" was sufficient answer to that plea for independence.

In reply to a query concerning his sensations when passing over he had begun "Wir Toden . . ." (We dead), but an interruption had prevented the completion of the sentence. I asked him to go on with it, in English, which he seemed able to use with greater facility than when I last saw him in Berlin.

"We dream: we long for life; we live again," was his reply.

I had been reading "Towards the Stars," and it seemed appropriate to ask "Peter" about it. He said it was well-known "over there" and was, on the whole, a good book, but contained a number of errors. "Johannes," the person who is said to have been communicating through Miss Travers Smith, is, according to "Peter," an imposter, a "rotter," whose real name is William Reade—an American who died only a few years ago. Asked why he should have wished to mislead thousands, "Peter" replied, "We do not know."

About this time a new phase began. "Peter" suggested I should sit for automatic writing. I was to sit quietly, pencil in hand, and wait for it to move unaided by me. As I was on holiday, and time of no particular importance, I decided to pursue the experiment in whatever direction chance turned it. By wishing for "Peter" he came like the slave to Aladdin's lamp. I was beginning to be conscious of messages at all times of the day, and every evening, when we sat, he confirmed the messages which I had written in the morning or "heard" during the day.

The first words which faintly traced themselves on

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the paper when I sat for automatic writing were, "We love y . . ." (confirmed by "Peter" in the evening).

He had undertaken to make a statement on the subject of prophecy. This was it:

"Prophets work in the realms of pure time." Prophecy was not the gift of all "over there"; but they could see farther than we and were aware of factors unknown to us.

I asked for advice regarding the immediate future and "Peter's" replies (evidently) are important:

"Stay no longer in Kornwall."

"Why not?"

"Perhaps twice too long."

"Yes, but why?"

"Trop long."

"Yes, but *why?*"

"More work in London."

The "K" in Cornwall is interesting, and the construction of the next sentence is a German one. "Vielleicht zweimal zu lange."

"Do you remember the date of your death?"

"August 29."

"Where?"

"Berlin."

"What was the cause?"

"Tubercle."

"But you were not T.B. before?"

"No."

"What brought it on?"

"Hunger."

"But why on earth didn't you write to me?"

"I loved you too much."

The pause that followed presumably revealed my distress at the thought of so unnecessary a death. The table again began to move.

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"Please do not mind."

I asked what he would do if he had the choice of staying there or coming back. He said decidedly that he would stay where he was.

"Are you merely contentedly resigned or joyfully happy?"

"Joyful."

Mrs. Scott expressed her surprise that anybody could be joyful when separated from dear friends, and he replied that he was *not* separated.

A curious incident, trivial in itself but important evidently, must now be recorded. It had become apparent to us that "Peter" objected to Mrs. Scott's presence. His twice repeated injunction to leave Cornwall, and other incidents, led us to suppose that he was jealous—if the word can be used—of anybody's influence on me! I talked to him about it, mentally, in the way which seemed to work so easily, and told him to apologize to her. That evening the first words were "Rood to Mrs. Scott," the mis-spelling of rude being curiously interesting.

We set his mind at rest, and then he asked humbly: "Have I pleased Mrs. Scott?"

The seventeenth of September in bed, I had been conscious of a presence that I can only describe as a hazy body of opaque light, yellowish-pink in hue. It was formless. On the following day "Peter" said he had tried to appear to me and would go on trying till he succeeded.

The nineteenth of September I had a letter, from Munich, from "Peter's" mother. It was dated the fourteenth and gave no intimation that she was aware of his death. She had not heard from him for some time, but a friend had lately called on her with news of him which she regarded as unsatisfactory. We must bear in mind that on the first of September "Peter" had declared he had died ten days earlier; later, he stated that he had



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died on the twenty-ninth of August. Assuming the latter date to be correct, it was at least remarkable that his mother should not have heard.

During that day I was, need I say, peculiarly uneasy. I had grown to believe that I was actually in touch with my dead friend, and this letter cast serious doubts on the matter. "Peter" had lived alone in Berlin and it was at least possible, though improbable, that it had been nobody's business to acquaint his mother with his passing.

That evening "Peter" came at once.

"You know why I have asked you to come?"

"Yes. Letter Mutter."

"Have you any explanation?"

"Yes. I passed on since my friend saw her."

"Does she know now?"

"Yes."

"Who wrote to her?"

"Heinz Ludwig."

"Has she written to me again?"

"Yes."

"When shall I hear?"

"Tuesday."

"Did you hear what I was whistling on the beach this morning?"

"Tristan."

"Do you know why?"

"Weil unruhig" (Because uneasy).

The reason for this last apparent irrelevancy is that "Peter" and I had frequently found ourselves humming or whistling that uneasy passage for the English horn with which the third act of Tristan opens, and recognised that it betokened restlessness.

That morning my automatic writing consisted only of the words "Zu schwer zu schreiben" (Too difficult to write) which "Peter" afterwards confirmed. He had also

## PETER

tried to materialize the evening before. The impression I received this time was that he was trying to press the opaque mass of light against my face. He confirmed this and said, as I had expected, that it signified a "kiss."

"Peter" was asked by Mrs. Scott if it harmed me when he attempted to materialize.

"I take the power from him and put it back."

When asked if I could sit alone he replied that there must be more than one to form a "circuit"—like the positive and negative in electricity.

On the twenty-first of September, exerting myself unnecessarily when climbing, I became conscious of having strained my heart. "Peter's" concern was expressed in the evening: "Heart is weak. See doctor. Tell me doctor's opinion."

This was the last sitting in Cornwall. On the twenty-second I returned to London taking with me the dog, Leander. I sat for a short time with Horace Shipp. "Peter" came and we asked if he had any comment to make on my journey.

"Yes, Leander gave trouble."

A woman had objected to my taking the dog into the carriage and he had had to be relegated to the guard's van.

"What did I bring apart from the dog and luggage?"

"Tea-urn." I had bought one at a sale.

"Can you see what is on the piano?"

"Yes. Bust" (Bust of me).

"Do you like it?"

"No. Modelling is good."

"What is wrong with it?"

"Everything else."

The next day was Tuesday. No letter came. I sat for automatic writing and got a large number of terms of endearment, injunctions to get on with the play and

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because I had attempted to shift some heavy furniture, an admonition: "Warum hast Du so streng gearbeitet?" (Why did you work so strenuously?)

No letter came that day from "Peter's" mother. On the twenty-third I had a stream of messages (automatic writing) chiefly of an extravagantly affectionate character, and in the evening I sat with Horace and Flora Kendrick Shipp. Apart from a few generalities, the interesting thing at this séance was a sudden interruption from "Peter" himself to say: "Excellent omen! Look in letter-box. I think letter is there." A journey to the letter-box proving fruitless, however, "Peter" apologized. "I thought it was. I have only recently heard that it was posted." On this occasion he could not be persuaded to say definitely when it would come. His concern for my health persisted and he asked: "Have you gone to doctor?"

During the next day a disconcerting incident occurred. I decided I would write to a friend of "Peter's" in Berlin and turned up some old letters in order to find his correct name and address. I found that his name was Heinz Wolff. It will be recalled that "Peter" had given me the name of Heinz Ludwig as that of the friend who had informed his mother of his death. Now, I was aware that "Peter" also had a friend named Heinz Ludwig, and it looked as if the two names had been confused. I sat for automatic writing and waited for an explanation. "Forgive mistake," was written.

"What is the correct name?"

"Heinz Wolff." Then followed these phrases, among others: "Only be patient. Oh, Hermon, why are you so incredulous? What joy when you know."

And later: "Nothing I can say will convince U until U receive letter. Only be patient. Du bist ein Kind" (You are a child).

## PETER

*Next morning, the twenty-fourth of September, I received a letter from the living Peter in Berlin.*

I showed this epistle to Horace Shipp and he agreed that it would be interesting to sit again.

"Peter" tilted the table.

"You can't be 'Peter.' I have a letter from 'Peter' who is in Berlin."

"I am 'Peter'."

"Nonsense. 'Peter' is alive in Berlin."

"I died since that letter was written."

"I don't believe you."

"I am 'Peter'."

"Why do you say that? You are not 'Peter'."

"I am."

H. S.: "If you are 'Peter' where did you meet me in Berlin?"

"Outside of. . . ."

H. S.: "Well?"

"B . . . (unintelligible)."

H. S.: "What did I give you?" (This was a matter of which I was ignorant.)

"Bo . . . Bodmin."

The word Bodmin may have been in my mind, as I had lately passed through that town. The gift in question had been a bottle of scent. It is possible that "bottle" had been incompletely passed telepathically from Shipp's mind to mine.

A sitting having been arranged for that evening, we decided to hold it and there the last scene of this curious psychic drama took place. Four persons were present. The table tilted and we asked who was communicating.

"Peter. . . ."

"Nonsense."

"Peter. . . ."

"What is the use of your saying you are Peter? Peter

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is alive and well. I have a letter from him and another from somebody who recently saw him."

"I died since I wrote that."

"I don't believe you. Why did you tell me weeks ago that you were dead?"

"I lied."

"Now, it is no use your going on in this foolish way. I am quite willing to believe that you have come without evil intention, but you are not Peter, are you?"

"No."

"Who are you then?"

"Fop!" (my old friend of the early sitting).

"Why did you come again?"

"Because I love you."

"But it is not the way to ingratiate yourself with me, to lie."

"I was foolish."

"What are your intentions?"

"Good. Please go on sitting."

"But why should I?"

"Because I love you."

"I am sorry; but I do not feel disposed to go on."

"I can be helpful."

"I am sorry, but I do not like liars."

"Please go on sitting."

"Is my mother there?"

"Yes."

"Mama—did you know that 'Peter' was a Fop?"

"No."

"Do you want me to go on sitting if such creatures can come in?"

"No."

"Can you explain this matter?"

"No. Evil spirits get in."

"Is he good or evil?"



## PETER

"Good."

"Good, and yet he lies?"

"Evil."

"But you said 'good'."

"No. *He* did."

There the experiences, for the present, end. But before closing this statement I should like to make a few observations.

Except in the account of the second séance at Mrs. Dawson-Scott's, I have not referred to the "leprechaun," but even an abridged account of these experiments should make some further reference to this inexplicable creature. The leprechaun, calling himself variously Oke and Okey, has interrupted every séance, *without exception*. In the early days we frequently confused messages purporting to come from "other spirits" with mischievous interpolations from Oke. In time I grew to distinguish his touch from that of other communicators, and in the foregoing resumé I have been careful not to quote phrases that were tainted with the peculiar character of the leprechaun. All those who spoke to us were aware of Oke's existence and seemed unable to get rid of him, though they declared that by persistently refusing to receive his messages we should finally exclude him altogether. "Peter," my "mother" and "Scott" were the most successful in evading his interference, because the emotional link was in these cases a strong one. Some time later Mrs. Scott was sitting with Miss Beatrice Harraden and another entity of this sort came to the table. He called himself Tosty.

"I met Okey and he told me to come. He said you were good fun."

Experienced spiritualists to whom I have mentioned the matter do not seem to be surprised at our experience. Leprechauns and other non-human creatures are, apparently, a commonplace of "the other side."

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If I had been alone in conducting this experiment, I should not have felt justified in making known my findings; but except in the case of the "materializations" and the "automatic writing," all the messages were delivered in the presence of at least one other person, and generally in the presence of several. My fellow sitters were in most cases people well known in literature and art and are certainly above the average in intelligence and perspicacity. Although the table did not move when I was not putting my hands on it—because I admittedly was the medium—nobody doubted that when it did move it was independently of my conscious will.

Concerning the character of the *soi-disant* "Peter," I must admit that it tallies remarkably with the real Peter. Certain tricks of expression—the frequent use of the tentative "perhaps," the German construction often employed when using English, the haphazard mixture of English and German, with a rare drop into French, the obvious interest in the theatre and my work—these things are characteristic. That he would not, in the flesh, make use of such expressions as "God is love" I have no doubt; but that he might be moved to such things when out of the flesh, I cannot deny. Of his affection for me I stand in need of no proof; but I am convinced he would not express it in the fulsome and extravagant language used by "Peter." The phrases—not quoted above—"Ich liebe Dich wie niemals man geliebt hat" (I love you as no man has ever loved before) and "I love you with all my soul," are definitely out of character.

I know of no explanation of these phenomena; but it might be useful to adumbrate certain possibilities. The theory of survival seems to me neither proved nor denied by what this enquiry has elicited. Assuming that Fop is an objective personality, that, in itself, does not constitute an argument for survival. He may be a non-human

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entity. The various entities which have communicated at the sittings have been, it is true, remarkably faithful to their characters as known to the sitters; but whether any remark made by them can be regarded as definitely proving survival of personality, I gravely doubt. The most remarkable, to my mind, was the coming of the unexpected "David Norris" in response to a request for David Morris. If the experiment does not provide evidence of survival, however, the phenomena are such as could be explained by survival.

A second possibility is that the whole thing is an objectivisation of my sub-consciousness. I may have built up a Peter sub-consciously which took objective life in the same way as the "Six characters in search of an author," do in Pirandello's play. If the theory of sub-consciousness is accepted, however, the David Norris incident still remains unexplained—and I, for one, can see no explanation of it. It must be borne in mind, too, that this creature "Peter," alias Fop, which it is assumed my sub-consciousness created, became so independent of me that it could lie in the face of evidence which it must realize would bring about its final defeat.

Certain other facts in this connection must not be disregarded. By far the greater body of information which went to the building up of "Peter" could certainly be dug up from my mind . . . but could all of it? The play "Ruprecht, Herzog von Preussen" said to be by Heinrich von Kleist, does not appear in the collected works of Kleist.

Let us look for a moment at the theory which the "Thing" itself suggests. Top impersonates "Peter" because it loves me! Is that so fantastic as, on the surface, it would appear to be? Can one deny that there may be unattached creatures wandering through space seeking to unite themselves with some sympathetic entity?

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Loneliness can be a most devastating condition and it is at least conceivable that lonely creatures—human, sub-human, non-human, super-human, what you will—go in search of anchorage. “Foolish” Fop admitted that he was, but he denied that he was evil except in so far that he lied. I must confess that I have never during the course of this experiment been conscious of the presence of evil. If Fop exists and is not a figment of the *joint imagination of some half-dozen people*, I am inclined to believe that he is not malignant. Sentimental, persistent, unreliable, but not necessarily evil.

Another conceivable explanation has been suggested to me, and I put it down because it is worth while considering all possibilities. Perhaps the real “Peter’s” astral body has been taking periodical trips to me and getting this contact; and, being unable to account for its own presence out of the body, assumed that it was dead. I am not familiar with the ways of the astral body and hold no brief for this suggestion, which seems rather to ignore the circumstantial account of “Peter’s” death in Berlin from tuberculosis!

Whatever may be the correct theory to account for the various phenomena I have described, one thing is perfectly clear. It is dangerous for Tom, Dick and Harry to exploit this interesting field of investigation unless they are prepared to sift everything they dig up with the minutest care. People with no gift for critical examination may be seriously misled and drawn into believing things about the other side of the grave for which they have only the flimsiest evidence. That spirits communicate with human beings still in the flesh, I do not for a moment deny; but I do deny that their communications are necessarily valuable. My own experience proved one thing conclusively: that the power, whatever it was, which

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communicated with me was a liar. A pathetic, well-meaning liar, perhaps, but a liar nonetheless.

People with strong minds, critical acumen, and no nerves may be encouraged to study this vast tract of little-explored psychology; but those drawn to it by a morbid or vulgar curiosity, those with weak nerves, and those with a too-keen desire to reach some beloved dead person, should be warned off. The expression "critical acumen" however is not synonymous with unimaginativeness, nor should the absence of "nerves" involve lack of sensitiveness.



## A CRY IN THE NIGHT

By C. A. DAWSON-SCOTT

“**I**F Mick were to home, he would soon have th’ potato patch weeded, and th’ grass cut,” Micho Dugga told herself. She stood at the door of her cottage, looking across the neglected garden. Wanted a man to teal it, so it did, but her son was in South Afriky and would not be back before the turn of the year, if then. She herself, what with the sewing and the tending on the village women when they had their babies, she had enough to do.

The tall dun stems of seeded grass shook, as if the wind had got at their roots. Her sharp, country eyes detected a sinuous movement, a gleam of warm brown. Dry-fall had brought out the stoats. “Thirsty as a bullock, they be,” she said, “but they baint thirsty for water.”

Micho was more interested in the stoats—eight of them—running fiercely, like angry thoughts, than in the red of the evening sky. Flames in the west, and fainter flames in the east, a canopy of colour over her remote tiny cottage, one room up and one down. The cottage stood on a hill. “Forty-’leven” miles away she saw the sun rise over the round of the world. At the bottom of a long descent she saw it drop into the fire-shot grey of the sea. Top of the earth, like the hat on a man’s head!

“A terrible great view!” Whoever wanted to see that far? Not she. The grey stone house and the bit of flat garden, it was plain in the sight of all—like a wart. Not a thing she did but the village down in the hollow knew.

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It had mattered once, but of course, now that she was old—

On her table lay breadths of material. She was making a gown for Mrs. Rosevear's Rowena. Maid was having of her first baby at Christmas, and thought to wear it as soon as she was about again, but Micho Dugga knew better. She did not tell what she knew—at least not often. People had to beg and beg before she would.

Not a matter of money with her. She made more than she needed. The stocking in the old chest was crammed so full as it would hold, and every week there was more to go in. She liked work, she did, and she wouldn't tell things—unless she had a mind to.

Rowena was asking for the dress, and if Micho were to finish it that week, she must make the most of the light. She did not care to work after she had put a match to the lamp, drawn down the dark-blue blinds, drawn across them the red curtain. That was her hour, the hour to which she looked forward throughout the day. Her tablecloth was dark, and when she lighted the hanging lamp, brightness fell from under its shade, making a pool.

She stood for a moment to watch the trailing stoats, then turned into the cottage. Through the window the glow of the west fell on the table, on to the purple of the fine woollen gown. The woman seated herself on the bench and the red light fell over her shoulder as she set the stitches, turning the fray under her thumb and thinking.

She was not working as quickly as she belonged to. Her mind sprang about and she paused, went on again. Restless she was, as a girl expecting her sweetheart.

A long while since she had done aught but turn from one bit of work to another. Dreams were for young

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people, so they were, and she had had hers—and much good they had done her.

Would have liked a husband so well as other women; a man to dig in the garden, summertime, and set by the fire o' winter evenings. Someone to go up around with, and talk to—but, well, she couldn't put another in Ben's place. He had not treated her right, but there it was.

Besides, didn't she know he hadn't loved the madam whom he had married? Money there, and Ben cared for money, but he hadn't forgotten and he wouldn't, not till the earth covered him. She had seen to it that he shouldn't forget. Not difficult that, once you knew how.

She sighed, a full long breath. Queer she should set there dreaming. She could have said that she was listening for a certain step. Dusk and his step on the hard country of the road! He had not come that way for a pretty many years.

She looked up, hearing the click of the gate. Last night she had "seen" his face in the pool of lamp-light. She felt no surprise, therefore, that the man hesitating on the drexel should be Farmer Williams of West Vose.

Last time he had come to Noon Vears he had been a young man—both of them young—now he was middle-aged and had grown so fat the jelly of him shook. Some hill to come up, so it was, and he was panting like a wind-broken snail.

He stood, looking in, looking across at Micho Dugga. Physically depressed, his expression was also deprecating. Though he was a "strong" farmer, had lately bought the land he tealed, he would not venture to cross this threshold unless given leave.

The woman was in no hurry to ask him in. She put her work aside and went to the door. "You?" she said.

He stood before her like a child whose misdoings have been brought home to it, and who wants to be taken back

## A CRY IN THE NIGHT

into favour. "I never done yon no 'arm," he said anxiously.

"You can come in," and he followed her like a whipped dog. "There—I don't bear you no ill-will; nor—" she hesitated—"nor the boy don't neither."

"He know, then?"

"Village don't like for anyone to grow up ignorant."

Williams crossed the flagged blue floor, took the chair at the end of the table. He was tired and, under his eyes, the patches of loose skin were creasy full. Micho Dugga began to fold away the breadths of purple. "Tes a braave walk for you from Vose—nowadays."

"Seemed natural to walk, somehow," the man told her. "And, anyway, the mare didn't 'pear to be right at all."

In the days of their mutual youth he had not had a horse. His walking today told her he was come by way of the past.

"What be you wantin' of me—Mr. Williams?" and his flinching told her she had done as she meant, touched him on the raw.

But he wouldn't let it move him from his purpose. Leaning across the table, he looked at her anxiously, this woman whom he had left, to whom in the night-time before he slept, he had so often come home by the ways of thought. Now he had come painfully, on his feet. He had had to come, and it was not that she had drawn him. Not this time.

She understood—all the things that were to him a mystery; and, if she didn't hold the past against him—and how could she?—she might tell him what to do.

"You—you have the 'sight.'"

That old bitterness in the mouth was giving place to pity. Poor chap. Poor old chap and he was Ben.

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"That's of it," she agreed. "I can 'see,' but I can't do nothing."

"You can tell I what to do and 'tis all I want." His fat reddish face crinkled in an annoyed self-pity. The world was not treating him as well as it belonged to. A hard-working fellow, good husband, good father, and saving. What more could anyone—the anyone who ruled the earth—what more could that Anyone expect of a chap? And yet—

"There's someone who is ill-wishing of me, and I got to know who 'tis. Things is all turning bad. Last week old sow ate her farrow, and now mare's acting as if she wur bewitched. Sure, I don't want to lose she."

The crimsons were dying off the great arch from Brown Willhay to the sea, and it was dark in the room. Micho lit the hanging lamp and drew the red curtain across the blue blind. "You got to 'see' for yourself," she said. "Abide there while I get the glass."

She ran—a girl again—up the boarded-off stairs; but, once in the upper room, put a hand to her breast and sank down on the side of the bed. To see him once more, to have him sitting there below!

As the years between were so many, her heart belonged to have gone quiet, yet it was beating as on that first day. . . .

Ben had dug a grave for love and something lay in it, but she had a heart full of the old kindness, the more than that, and poor dear needed her help. Yes, fye, and she would do what she could. Once before, he had come to her in distress, but then she had been of no use. If his father wanted him to marry the drop of vinegar with all that money, and he could not stand out, well, a man travels his own road.

She wiped her eyes, tried to still the trembling of her



## A CRY IN THE NIGHT

body. She must keep steady yet 'twas troubling to have him—sitting there, again and begging of her.

You might think you had come to the end—the end in this world, but the ghosts of old memories crep out. You could not lay them. Heave their heads up they would, spite of the years and that. Why, the room was full of them—this room to which Ben had come so full of love, the room in which their son had been born, and in which she had lain down alone for so many years.

She took the mirror from the wall and went down to him. She did not need to look in the glass; could 'see' in the pool of light from the lamp; and even when she shut her eyes. It grew on you—'seeing.' But it was different with Ben.

"Stand there, your back to the light. There, so that it falls on the glass. Now, look in steady while I say the words." She muttered the ancient formula which, after all, was prayer—of a sort. He could not hear what she said. It was not right that he should. He only knew that the incantation was repeated three times and that—gradually—the polished surface of the mirror was growing dark—like water when it is near the boil.

She hushed and waited. If he 'saw' she knew who it would be. The woman had not kept her mouth shut, and it was common talk that Williams had cheated her.

"There's a cloud," he said, his voice thick.

Micho stood at his elbow. "And in the cloud?"

"Something—" he blinked to clear his sight, "something black. She have her back turned, but I know who 'tis."

"Ah!"

"'Tis Sandra Treffry."

"Why should she ill-wish you?"

"We fallied out over Gorm Medder. I told she not to bid for't at the sale, and that if she didn't I'd see she

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wadn't the loser. You do know the farm wur sold in one lot and so she couldn't have bid. Yet she think she've a right to that field. But 'tis my farm and I am not going to give she the pick of the land."

Certain of his righteousness he was, yet Mrs. Treffry told a different tale. She had been offered the field before ever the farm was put up to auction and he had asked her not to take it but to come in with him and buy the whole. She had agreed to that. Then he had gone privily to the owner and made an offer, which the man had accepted.

Micho did not challenge his story. It was nothing to her. "But Sandra Treffry have a dark power," she said.

He gave the glass to her and she turned it face down on the table.

"Don't I know it?" he cried. "Isn't that why I'm here to-night?"

The woman shook as if caught in a sudden breath of arctic air. Yes, fye, Ben asked, and people—people like herself—gave. Nevertheless he had come, he had had to come—to her.

"Bible can tell 'ee what's best to do," was all she said.

"Yes, sure." This was an oracle he had often consulted. He had done so in this very cottage before. Learnt from it that he would make money, a plenty of money. He went to the shelf.

Micho's heart contracted. Ah, then, he had not forgotten? A lifetime in that little shelter and things in the places that were theirs. He knew.

The book was old, with time-browned pages and a number of scratchy entries—births, deaths and marriages—on the inside of the cover. Williams gave it to her and fetched the door-key.

"'Twill tell us right," he said, cheerfully expectant.

She set the book between them on the table, then, tak-

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ing Ben's hand—oh, that warmth—held it while she uttered the prescribed formula, and opened the book. Shutting his eyes, he laid the key blindly on the page. They bent greying heads to look.

"Agree with thine adversary quickly."

The man stood back. "What do it mean?"

"It mean that if Sandra Treffry think she've a right to Gorm Medder, you've got to let she have it."

The red of his face darkened, his lips turned blueish, but he looked set as Vose Head. "I can't, my dear, I can't." Gorm was worth more to him than a farrow of pigs, more even than his mare. "Set you down a minute and I'll tell 'ee for why."

She obeyed and, leaning on the table, stared into the darkly bright pool below the lamp. A dark surround of cloth and the splash of light!

"'Tis this way. I've got Peter coming back from Canada to help me with the farm. 'Taint to be supposed he'd hold with my giving a bite out of it. You know how Gorm lie, side on to the sea. That bit of coast has its vally. . . ."

He spoke from the shadow beyond the lamp and she could hardly hear what he said. She was listening to the cries of drowning men. Driven out of her course by an Atlantic storm, the ship had struck a rock. She knew Peter, Ben's only son, and she was 'seeing' him now.

A limp figure washing to and fro in the tides. Peter would not come home to help his father teal West Vose.

"Then I got to put by for Jennifer's marriage penny."

Jennifer? Micho was not 'seeing' now, but she knew. Luke Hellier was some handsome, and the maid was always snaking out to meet him unbeknownst. She met him in the fields by day and, after dark, in the deep lanes—and Luke was a married man. No need of marriage pennies for the like of Jennifer.

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"Your grandchildren," said Micho quietly, "will bear your own name."

"What do you mane?"

She put it plainly. "They will be like my son—bastards."

He looked up, more than startled. "What be saying, you?"

Her face—wide and with eyes slightly aslant—was that of a sleep walker. "At long last," she told him in a stilly way so empty of personal emotion, it might have been a dead woman speaking, "things do be evened up. You'd be wise if you gived Sandra the medder."

He proffered a last excuse. "I got to think of me old age."

"Yours?" She was 'seeing' the heart at which the knives of Mrs. Treffry's ill-will were jabbing—that diseased, fat heart.

"Year or two after Peter come home I want to goo out of the farm and live independent. Got to save all I can for that."

She put a hand between her eyes and the pool of light. In spite of a fierce unwillingness she had 'seen'. But it need not be the end—not if he would take heed. A following fate was at his heels, crowding upon him. It might be delayed. Might it not even be turned aside?

"Ben, my dear life," she said, and her voice trembled with the urgency of her unchanging heart. "Sandra Treffry's cottage is between this and the farm. You pass it going home. Ben—stop and settle up with she. 'Tis most urgent that you should."

"I'd rather risk—"

"You dunno what 'tis you risk."

"You'll help me all you can?"

Her voice rose. "Ah, my dear, I haven't no dark power. Don't 'ee delay, Ben. Agree with her. . . ."

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He stared, a little shaken. "I—I dunno."

"She'm stronger'n you."

"Stronger'n me? Aw, now—" He felt uncomfortable. Was there real danger? He doubted, could not quite believe. "Do you mean that if Sandra Treffry think she have a grievance against me, I'm to give in about it and let her have her way?"

Micho nodded eagerly. "I do that."

"'Tedd'n't jonic, then." It wasn't fair, indeed it was not, and if it had been other than Micho who urged this on him, he would have laughed. But Micho—he could not go against her. Yet, give up Gorm! If it had been Cunegar, or Pigs' park, but Gorm. . . .

What was Micho saying in that queer voice? "In a matter of life and death—land is dirt."

"Death?" he repeated, thinking of the mare. Lose she, would he? And all for an old woman's spite. He would like to let out her black blood, so he would. He had come on a fool's errand, for here was no aid but only advice he did not want to take. Not if he could anyway help it, no. Well, well, nothing to do but clop over home again.

He got up gloomily and found Micho between him and the door. It seemed as if she could not let him go. She talked and every word she said made him feel more uneasy. The tales of hers, true they were and he knew it. Might be a good thing to do as she was telling. Might be—well, he didn't know, he would think it over.

"Agree with thine adversary *quickly*." Micho wouldn't hear of his thinking it over.

"This very night," said she, and her words struck through his unwillingness. Something outside Micho, outside his mind, was 'requiring' this of him. Well, then, he'd—he'd do it. See Sandra that very night and all. On his way back—



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"Haven't got a drop of something, I suppose?"

"Don't keep nothing in the house."

Poor dear looked tired, done. "If you'll wait I could make 'ee a coop o' tea. 'Twould hearten 'ee for the walk back—and no trouble, no trouble at all."

"No, no; I must be getting on. 'Tis a long traipse across they commons."

She could remember when it had been too short for her reputation, and her smile was thin. Not that she had ever borne him ill-will. As she saw the matter, it had been her fault that she had gotten a hurt at his hands. A woman should not trust a man; if she did she must take the consequences—and every mother's daughter belong to know that.

Moreover, to-night, the past was remote and unimportant. Between herself and Ben was the tie—the tie that links a man to his woman—and he had proved it by coming to her. At the bottom and the back of things was his reliance and her response. 'Tisn't the living by oneself that do make a body feel lonely.

Micho went with her man to the door—to the garden-hatch—then stood in the lane to watch him take the field path which led across the unfenced lots to the commons. The last time she would be watching him go from her. . . .

A light was burning in Sandra Treffry's window, and, with a shudder, Micho thought of the widow's thoughts running, dark and fierce, running like stoats on a trail. She went in and shut the door between herself and them. Although she had not "the power" she could pray.

The night was moonless but, above the sea, light lingered. Williams crossed the field of ripening barley, the field of lucerne, the freshly-ploughed land. The soil was light and sandy, yet for a tired man this last was heavy going. The excitement of his talk with Micho

## A CRY IN THE NIGHT

was passing and he realized that he was weary. The plod, plod of one foot after another was as much as he could manage, and it was foolish of Micho, so it was, to have asked him to see Mrs. Treffry that night. Later on.

Perhaps.

After all, wrong doing was a matter of law and, as Mrs. Treffry had not any writing to show, his conscience was clear. Besides, how did he know Micho Drugga was not in league with the woman? Once on a time he had promised to marry Micho and it had not been convenient. Maybe she was still holding of it against him.

He couldn't be sure. . . .

A piece of unfenced road took him past the gate of Mrs. Treffry's cottage. Although the red blind was drawn, he knew that she was behind it. He thought of his wife. If she ever heard tell of what he had been doing that evening she'd give him no peace. Never had much, but he needn't go for to make things worse than they were.

She'd say he had been "fried for a fool."

More especially if he gave way about Gorm Meadow. No—best sleep on it. Perhaps he would ride over the morrow's morn and come to some arrangement. He would not give Sandra Treffry the meadow but he might let her rent it. He would do it because she was a poor widow and he had a good heart. Witching him? He was not afraid of that, then.

Foolish of Micho to think he could stop on his way home, and he so tired; stop and go in and settle the matter. Woman would think he was maazed. No, to-morrow. . . .

In the hush of her cottage Micho sat with her back to the lamp. The grey walls ringed her from the black of the night, and about them the whips of feathered tamarisk

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were stirless in the still air. She was muttering to herself, saying the same words over and over. But although she prayed, she also listened, waiting.

From somewhere in her neglected garden a thin scream of anguish cut the dark. The prayer was hushed on her lips. "They stoats have made their kill," she thought, shivering.

They would no longer be thirsty.

In the valley bottom some labouring men, on their way to work the following morning, found Farmer Williams with his face towards the farm he had lately bought, and with his hands clutching the earth.

His death, the doctor said at the inquest, had been due to fatty degeneration of the heart.

# THE GHOUL

By EVANGELINE WILBOUR  
BLASHFIELD

WE were rather a gay party on the deck of the Professor's dahabeah that moonlight evening at Luxor, but the Captain's story sobered our levity and we broke up in a mood half-pensive, half-constrained, that affected us all, each after his kind. This last naturally, since we were a multifarious lot thrown together for the moment by the chances of travel.

One of us was known by her immediate party as the Investigator and was obviously the victim of a thirst for information which she slaked by collecting disconnected data of all kinds.

Our host, the Professor, was a savant who spent his winters on the Nile; he entertained as easily as he read cursive Greek, and the dinner had been good.

The talk had been largely of the English occupation and the Investigator was stronger on less complicated subjects. Accordingly, after coffee, she turned with a little air of decision to her neighbour, Achmed Effendi, and inquired cosily—she always began with generalities—

“Are you interested in the supernatural?”

“I might be if I knew anything about it,” replied the Arab, in the purest of British accents.

“Oh, don't you?” she lamented; “I'm so disappointed. I thought that I should find spirits—mairds and ghins and

ghouls—here! Don't tell me that they have disappeared like the lotos and chibouque!"

"We have ghost-stories like yours, but none that have much local colour, I fear," Achmed replied, politely but not encouragingly.

Here a man of the Camel Corps sauntered into the conversation. "You were talking of ghouls," he said slowly, "and askin' if we'd ever seen one. I have. It was after Tosky in '89. You remember?" he added turning to a brother officer.

"It's a long story—and hardly a dinner-table yarn," murmured the other.

"A story, a real, true story about a ghoul! How thrilling! We are all pining to hear it," exclaimed the Investigator, fixing shining eyes on Captain Egerton.

"The Doctor knows it as well as I do," said the Captain, shifting the responsibility.

But the Doctor demurred. "Moonlight's too fine to spoil with anything gruesome," he said. However Captain Egerton, whose imagination was not his strong point, persisted. If the Doctor was reluctant he would tell us the story himself.

"We—it was just after Tosky," he began.

"What was Tosky?" queried the Investigator.

"It was—ur—ur—. Well, you see," explained the Captain, "in the summer of '89, Waad en Negumi, one of the Mahdi's ablest generals, invaded Egypt."

"Wasn't he the general who defeated Hicks?" interjected the Professor.

"The same—an uncommonly clever man, and an awfully plucky beggar. Really you know, to lead an army of five thousand soldiers, as many women, babies, and camp-followers—"

"And the wretched prisoners whom he drove before him out of their ruined villages," added Achmed.



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"With no commissariat, and only a few transport camels," went on Carew, "a hundred miles across a waterless desert to fight a battle was rather a mad project. Half the garrison of Wady Halfa, under Colonel Wodehouse were marching between him and the river, just ahead of his troops and the Sirdar—"

"That's Anglo-Arabic for General Grenfell," explained the Professor.

"Came down from the north, joined us at Tosky, and forced Negumi to give battle. It didn't seem like battle to me, more like a big row; like the grand chain in the Lancers when half the men don't know the figure and turn the wrong way. I don't remember much about it except that I kept thinking that when it was over I should get something to drink."

"Without being shot first," suggested the Professor, grimly.

"I was dead-beat before the battle began," added the Captain. "My black men were so hot to fight that I had to keep ridin' up and down the lines crackin' 'em over the head to keep 'em quiet until we got our order to charge. Well, anyhow," the Captain pulled up suddenly, "all this has nothing to do with the story you want."

"When it was over we were saddle with a lot of prisoners. The dervishes we shot—not *officially*, don't-cherknow. What could we do with them? We had no rations for 'em, and it was kinder than lettin' 'em starve—and some of 'em escaped—"

"The old one you hid in your tent, for instance, and whom you've taken care of ever since," said Carew.

"That's because I can't get rid of him," returned the man of war, with a fine blush at being discovered in the act of committing mercy. "We divided the women prisoners among our black troops. Among the young women was one tall girl with big eyes, who was by way

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of bein' good-lookin', though she was dark. The other women were making an awful row, wailin' and puttin' sand in their hair, when we took 'em into camp, but this one was quite quiet—dazed or dull, it seemed to me."

"Why, man, she was a barbarian queen among those cattle," protested Carew. "Who knows? She may have been a gentlewoman in her own country, wherever it was. She had delicate hands that had never worked. Neither had she, poor wretch, and naturally enough her masters—"

"Her what?" gasped the Investigator.

"Her—ur—ur—husbands, then, if you like that better."

"I don't know that I do. Please explain."

Carew coloured like a debutante, and twisted his baby moustache.

"You see it's like this. The black trooper is a marrying man. He won't fight without his *hareemat*. In camp we bar more than one wife at a time, but we can't prevent him from changing that one rather often. There used to be a kind of informal matrimonial exchange on Fridays, which shocked the missionaries, and they stirred up the moralists at home; so we got a *mo'alem* from Cairo, whom we called a native chaplain for our niggahs, and he said a prayer over them whenever they *chassez-croissez-ed* and changed partners. It wasn't an ideal arrangement, and wouldn't satisfy the Dissenting Liberals in Birmingham, but it was the best we could do."

After this apology had been received in bewildered silence by the Investigator, and with covert grins by the men—more amused than edified by this attempt to drape raw savagery with the mantle of British propriety—the narrative finally fell into the Captain's hands.

It appeared that Yasmin, which was the tall woman's

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sweet name, made trouble at once in a half-a-dozen families. The heads of several husbands and fathers already abundantly provided with domestic ties were immediately turned by her mere appearance, and after vainly trying to adjust rival claims, the aspirants were persuaded to draw lots for her, and a trooper of the Camel Corps won.

In a day or so she was on the market again, her value much decreased by the declaration of her late possessor that she had a devil in her; that she frightened him with her eyes—and then, when she had quite bewitched him stole out of his tent at night and remained away till morning, doubtless on some gruesome business. A braver or less credulous gentleman succeeded him and still more promptly divorced her, and then another and another. All had fallen under the same benumbing spell; all had been rendered nerveless, motionless, by the weird force that drew a man's soul out of its sheath, and fettered it at will. All told the same story of being turned to stone under her steady look; of lying helpless when she glided from the tent, and of seeing her return at dawn, weary, haggard, with torn hands and dust-covered head.

The Doctor was deeply interested in her. He said she suggested to his mind old tales of possession, and explained a lot of curious phenomena. But he couldn't explain her satisfactorily to the other wives in the camp, who were jealous of her to a woman, and wild with fear as well. There were horrible whispers about her crawling through the quarters. She was not only a sorceress, she was a vampire—a ghoul. She had been seen in the moonlight by a terrified sentry slinking like a jackal out of camp, and running toward the battlefield where the unburied dead still lay. She had returned the next morning with bloody hands.

Rumour became so busy with her, and in such hideous fashion, that the English officers were obliged to give

her a tent to herself and a white man to guard it. As for the native officers, they were convinced that she was a ghou, and clutched their *hegabs* when they passed her tent. They even asked for a courtmartial to try this strange case, which the troopers would have settled more simply by throwing her into the Nile, attached to something weighty. Similar suggestions soon became ominously numerous, and the apparently childish affair rapidly assumed a sinister aspect.

To interfere with the *hareemat* was against all precedent. The native women were outside or beneath military discipline, or indeed discipline of any sort save of the domestic variety. The code of Islam, scrupulously respected by the English Protectorate, treated the human female as an irresponsible being. The men of her family answered for her good behaviour, and the law left in their hands the punishment of her misdeeds and even of her crimes. The well-bred man affected ignorance of a woman's existence. Still, English gentlemen could not allow this wretched being to be torn to pieces by a pack of she-wolves who would not long be content merely to snarl at her, for only a firm belief in her maleficent powers protected her from some horrible form of death.

Captain Egerton and Mahmoud Bey had had an anxious consultation one night on this question. The "poison wind" had been blowing all day, laden with sand and hot as a blast from a kiln. It had unstrung their nerves and filled them with a feverish restlessness and sent curious electrical thrills shooting through their veins. The force of the wind had abated at sunset, but there were still fitful wafts of it, and one of them entered the officer's presence unceremoniously with Private Parkins when he interrupted their conference.

Private Parkins was Yasmin's guard, a comely, flaxen-haired English boy. On this special night something more

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potent than the heat had wiped the wholesome, brick-dusty colour off his cheeks, which wore a wan grey look, and excitement was tugging hard at the reins of discipline when he saluted and answered Captain Egerton's interrogative, "Well?"

"She's just gone toward Tosky—with a shovel which she stole from Private Cooper," panted Parkins. "Directly she left camp I came to you, as was your orders—"

"How did she pass the sentry?" questioned the Captain, curtly.

Parkins grinned in spite of his evident apprehension.

"She looked at 'im 'ard, and 'e almost dropped 'is gun and ran 'owlin'."

"When did she start?"

"Five minutes ago," replied Parkins, whose damp uniform and thumping heart testified to the time he had made in bringing his information.

"Take that little lanthorn with you—no, unlighted—and hand me that flask yonder," said the Captain, examining his revolver.

"You are surely not going to follow her?" exclaimed Mahmoud Bey in alarm.

"I surely am," returned Captain Egerton shortly.

"Don't. Let it alone. This is something you can't understand. You people know lots of things, but you don't know all. There are strange powers that you haven't seen at work."

"I am of your opinion, Mahmoud Bey," said the Doctor. "There are many curious phenomena which we have not yet had time to investigate. Of course, it is our duty to do so, when they come our way. I am going, too—if I may join the excursion."

Mahmoud shrugged his shoulders and touched the silver *hegab* under his tunic.

"You are crazy, both of you. Is it worth the risk of



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being struck rigid and speechless among those wolves and jackals, or worse, finding yourselves, or what will be left of you, on four paws, gnawing carrion under a hyena's hide?"

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed the Captain. "Come on."

And the Englishmen hurried off, followed by the still expostulating Mahmoud.

"We'll never come up with her at this rate," growled the Captain.

"I think you will, Captain, 'er feet is that bad—all cut and swollen—so you can easy overtake her," Parkins assured him respectfully.

As they bustled through the camp, Mahmoud made one more appeal "to their reason," as he expressed it, and then sadly left them to run upon their doom.

"I say, Doctor, perhaps you'd better go back," said Captain Egerton as they began to wade through the deep, hot sand of the desert.

"Go back? What for? Don't you remember that I am writing two articles one on elephantiasis, and the other on lycanthropy? I haven't had any luck with the first—only seen two cases since I came; and now's my chance for the other thing."

"But suppose something should happen, something *real*, of course? This girl may go out to meet some of the chaps who escaped—we are only three and it might—"

"Be safer if there were only two? You are a good logician! Go back if you like, but I won't. By Jove! There she is."

Through the haze of sand, a tall figure wavered into sight, her ample draperies blown backward like huge dusky pinions.

"There's your vampire; she does look like a big bat—one of those bloodsuckers from South America. She's trailing the wing, too— Why she's down."

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"'Er feet are that cut she can 'ardly walk," Parkins explained again.

"She's only a third-class witch, then, or she may have 'put down' her broomstick since the war. Perhaps she stole the shovel for a mount and her cantrips don't work on it."

"She'll hear us unless we keep quiet," suggested Egerton.

"Not she," contradicted the Doctor, "with this blast in her face carrying every sound down wind."

The figure limped on with bent head, collapsing every now and then in a mass of fallen draperies on the sand, and rising again to continue its march. After an hour of heavy walking, the wind which, though it seared the throat and crisped the lips, was sweet as only the air of the desert can be, reached them foul with the scent of the sepulchre.

The men glanced at each other and quickened their steps, for the fluttering wraith was pressing onward with renewed strength. A kind of vague horror oppressed its pursuers. Private Parkins remembered how Yasmin had merely tasted the rations he had brought her, picking at the rice just like Ameeneh, the ghoul-bride in Arabic story; the Captain recalled the compelling, magnetic gaze of those deep-set eyes; and a dozen gruesome images flitted through the Doctor's brain as he tramped steadily on.

By this time the outskirts of the battlefield had been reached, and delicate treading was required to avoid the stragglers who lay starkly, with grinning, eyeless faces to the dim moon. Before long they became conscious of the living among the dead; of black shadows that slunk away before them, and once Egerton stopped to examine footprints that crossed and recrossed their path.

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"Wolf or perhaps hyena," he said, and as if in response to his conjecture, an unearthly sound floated back to them on the tainted wind—a laugh, without mirth or significance, the cry of the ghoul. In the meantime the object of pursuit had made her way to the heart of the field of slaughter, which was a sight which should be spared all save the makers of war—and yet the kindly desert had cloaked some of its ghastliness. It had brought three most ancient and cunning *parasites*, the wind, the sun, the sand, to purify and embalm the dead; but the furred and feathered sanitary commissioners of the wilderness, had also been at work.

Yasmin walked on, straight as a homing bird, to an irregular stack of corpses; here she paused, bound back her veil, turned up her fluttering sleeves, and to the sick horror of those who, crouching on the sand, watched her, began to throw the piled up dead aside until she had uncovered the body of a tall dervish. At this moment the moon dropped her veil and glared red and sullen down on the battlefield. In the weird, unreal light, the three spectators saw the dead man lifted, after many efforts, out of the grisly heap, and dragged to a clear space of sand.

Though she had trailed him awkwardly and rather roughly over the ground, Yasmin now gathered her charge into her arms, and sinking softly down, laid the withered head gently on her shoulder. Then, with a wide gesture of protection and tenderness, which seemed to enfold the beloved burthen like a great wing, she swept her long veil round her dead, and rocked softly to and fro for many moments. Bending her head she uttered with shuddering sighs and tearless sobs, foolish fond words: "Oh my Strong One! Oh my Master! My Camel! My Beloved!" And, the rising tide of emotion overwhelming speech, she fell to unspoken endearments;

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low moans and wordless murmurs, the inarticulate language of passion.

There is something so impressive in the direct manifestation of an overmastering feeling that the three men, flat on the sand as they were, instinctively uncovered their heads. Private Parkins, sadly bejuggled by camp gossip, turned bewildered blue eyes on his superior officers. The Doctor felt it necessary to explain the obvious.

"She's been coming here night after night to look for him, and when she found him she hid him from the crows and the jackals under those others. She's come now to bury him and we are going to help her."

"Hush!" whispered Captain Egerton, "she's quiet again." For Yasmin had laid the dead man's head on her knees, and with raised arms and uplifted face sat motionless. One moment she sat, as if in dumb appeal to an unresponsive heaven, before she sent her voice quavering down the wind in that lamentation for the dead which once heard remains in the memory. The long, plaintive cry swelled, wavered, sank, ending abruptly in a deep note, and the mourner rising unfastened her veil, laid it carefully over the dead and began to dig his grave.

"It's our cue now," whispered the Doctor.

They were close upon Yasmin before she perceived them. Quick as light she straightened her bent back, and stood on the defensive like some fierce mother-beast, her tall figure dilating, and her jewel-like eyes, which had encroached sadly on her narrowed face, seeming to emit light.

"O Lady," said the Doctor, touching breast, brow, and mouth in Oriental salutation, "we come to bury your Lord. A strong man, and a great Captain deserves a better grave than a woman's hands can make."

The wildness of her look softened instantly; veiling her face with the weft of her loosened hair, she resigned the

shovel to the Doctor with a regal gesture. The three men worked, relieving each other at intervals, until a grave deep enough to baffle the paw of jackal or hyena was dug; then they moved away and left Yasmin alone for a little space with what had been her lover; and when they returned she helped them, dry-eyed and firm-lipped, to push the sand into the pit. After it was piled up, she threw herself upon it and lay there quietly, save for the long shudders which shook her from head to foot until the Doctor bade her return to camp, when she rose and followed the Englishmen like an obedient child, carefully covering her face with the shroud of her heavy hair, and keeping a certain distance, prescribed by Moslem etiquette, from her companions.

The dauntless spirit that had cowed her would-be masters, that had steeled her against the horrors of her quest, had departed. The Doctor's questions she answered half-shyly, half-sullenly in monosyllables; she either could not or would not explain the mystery of her hypnotic power; the sorceress had been cast out of her. At the door of her tent she kissed the hands of her escort, and with a noble humility bade them farewell.

The Captain stopped and for a time no one broke the silence.

"What became of Yasmin," finally questioned the Investigator. "Did she die?"

"No— Yes— She was drowned in the Nile two days afterwards. There was a strong current, and the river was high; perhaps some of the other women pushed her in. We never knew. You can't tell anything about native *hareemat*, and we don't interfere with them."



# HAUNTED HOUSES

By CAMILLE FLAMMARION

## I. STRANGE PHENOMENA IN A CALVADOS CASTLE

THE following account of the strange phenomena observed in 1875 in a Norman castle was drawn up by Mr. J. Morice, doctor of laws, on the report of the owner and witnesses, and was published in the *Annales des Sciences Psychiques* of 1893. "The honesty and intelligence of the owner of this castle," so writes Dr. Dariex, the editor of the *Annales*, "cannot be questioned by anyone. He is an energetic and intelligent man. He himself noted down every day all the extraordinary facts as they occurred. The other witnesses attested in turn the reality of the facts." Here follows the account, abridged where possible:

About the year 1835 there existed in Calvados an old castle belonging to the B. family, the Château du T. The place was in such a state of decay that a restoration was considered out of the question. It was replaced by another, built 150 yards to the north.

M. de X. inherited it in 1867, and went to live there.

In the month of October of that year, a series of extraordinary incidents, nocturnal noises and blows took place; which, after ceasing for some years, says M. de X. in his diary of 1875, began afresh at that time.

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The Chateau du T. had always passed for a scene of fantastic phenomena, and the haunt of ghosts. The X. family knew nothing of these noises when it took possession.

The following are extracts from the diary in question :

This is October, 1875. I propose to note down every day what happened during the previous night. I must point out that when the noises occurred while the ground was covered with snow, there was no trace of footsteps round the castle. I drew threads across all the openings, secretly. They were never found broken.

At present the household consists of the following: M. and Mme. de X. and their son; the Abbé Y., tutor to the son; Emile, coachman; Auguste, gardener; Améline, housemaid; Céline, cook. All the domestics sleep in the house and are considered to be trustworthy.

*Wednesday, October 13, 1875.*—The Abbé Y. having told us that his armchair changed its place, my wife and I accompanied him to his room, and we minutely observed the place of every object. We attached gummed paper to the foot of the armchair and so fixed it to the floor. We then left him, asking him to call me should anything extraordinary happen. At 9.45 the Abbé heard on the wall of his room a series of slight raps, which, however, were loud enough to be also heard by Améline, who slept in the opposite room. He then heard, in a corner of the room, a noise as of the winding of a big clock. Then a candlestick on his mantelpiece was moved with a grating noise, and finally he heard, and thought he saw, his armchair move. As he durst not get up, he rang the bell and I went up. On entering his room, I found the armchair had moved over a yard and was turned toward the fireplace. An extinguisher placed on the base

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of the candlestick was put on the candle; the other candlestick had been moved into a position where it overhung the mantelpiece by about an inch. A statuette placed against the mirror had been advanced eight inches. I retired after twenty minutes. We then heard two violent blows from the Abbé's direction. He rang the bell and assured me that the blows had been struck on the door of his wardrobe, at the foot of his bed.

*Sunday, October 31.*—A very disturbed night. . . . It sounded as if someone went up the stairs with superhuman speed from the ground floor, stamping his feet. Arrived on the landing, he gave five blows, so heavy that objects suspended on the wall rattled in their places. Then it seemed as if a heavy anvil or a big log had been thrown against the wall, so as to shake the house. Everybody got up and assembled in the passage of the first floor. We made a minute inspection but found nothing. We went to bed but more noises obliged us to get up again. We could only go to bed at about three o'clock.

*Wednesday, November 3.*—At 10.20 P.M. everybody was awakened by resounding steps, which quickly ascended the stairs. A series of blows shook the walls. We immediately got up. Shortly afterwards we heard the noise of a heavy elastic body rolling down the stairs from the second to the first floor, and bouncing from step to step. Arriving on the landing, it continued on its course along the passage, stopping at the balusters. Then came two loud thumps, followed by a formidable blow, as with a carpenter's mallet swung at arm's length, upon the door of the green room. Then a series of tripping, and repeated raps, sounding like the footsteps of animals.

*Friday, November 5.*—At 2 A.M. some Being rushed at top speed up the stairs from the entrance hall to the first floor, along the passage, and up to the second floor, with a loud tread which had nothing human about it. It

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was like two legs deprived of their feet and walking on the stumps. Then we heard numerous loud blows on the stairs and on the door of the green room. This took two minutes. A storm of wind, thunder, and lightning followed. At 1.20 the door of the green room was unlatched. Two loud knocks struck the door, three more inside the room, three on the door, and finally a prolonged rapping on the second floor, forty raps at least! This lasted two and a half minutes. At that moment everybody heard audible above the storm something like a cry, or a long-drawn trumpet-call. A little while afterwards we heard a loud shriek, and then another, as of a woman outside, calling for help. At 1.45 we suddenly heard three or four loud cries in the hall, and then on the staircase. We all got up and went round inspecting carefully. At 3.20 there was a galloping in the passage. We heard two fainter cries, but these were in the house.

*Friday, November 12.*—Several blows were heard, then shrill and loud cries, and finally sobs and cries, as of a woman who was suffering.

*Saturday, November 13, at night.*—Galloping as on preceding nights. Thirteen raps on the landing, eight violent blows on the door of the green room. The door opens and is banged violently. At 12.15 A.M., two loud cries on the landing. It is no longer the cry of a weeping woman, but shrill, furious despairing cries.

*Sunday, November 14.*—The Abbé's windows, though closed and fastened, were opened during Mass. He had locked his door and taken the key with him. Nobody could get into his room. During Vespers another of his windows was opened.

*Monday, December 20.*—At a quarter past twelve, Mme. de X. found, on entering her room, two chairs placed upside down on two armchairs. In the blue room I found a chair placed on the side-table.

## HAUNTED HOUSES

*Sunday, December 25.*—Coming home from High Mass, we went with the Abbé to his locked room. The cushions of the couch had disappeared. We found them placed on end, one beside the other, on the outer window-sill of his toilet cabinet. Before I put in a second window, I had stopped up this window by a piece of wood which was securely nailed to the inner frame. That piece of wood had been torn out without the trace of any tool and placed beside the cushions.

1 P.M.: Twice we heard knocks in the house. Mme. de X. went round and found the Abbé's room open, though he had locked it. A few minutes afterwards the drawing-room couch moved forward in two noisy rushes. Further noises upstairs, and another inspection. The Abbé's door, which had been locked, had opened.

5 P.M.: After Vespers we found a candlestick on the top of the Abbé's lamp, and the water-bottle placed on the base of the glass, which had been reversed. In his cabinet two shoes had been disposed fanwise on the window-sill and others on the plate by the night-light.

*Wednesday, December 29.*—Mme. de X. hearing a noise in the Abbé's room, went up followed by the latter. She heard a movement in the room, and put out her right hand to lift the latch. Before she could touch it she saw the key turn quickly in the lock and detach itself, hitting her left hand.

The blow was so strong that the place was sensitive and visible two days afterwards.

*Wednesday, January 5.*—The Rev. Father L., a Premonstrant Canon, had been sent here by the Bishop to judge the facts and help us. From the moment the Rev. Father arrived a sudden and absolute calm set in. Nothing happened either by day or by night.

*January 15.*—The Rev. Father made a religious ceremony.



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*January 17.*—Since January 15 we have heard some isolated and unusual noises in the night, but always from places too far away from Father L. for him to hear. He left us today, and his departure was immediately followed by a new set of phenomena as intense and serious as those which had preceded his coming.

*January 25.*—At 4.30 P.M. much noise upstairs. Madame went up with Améline and found the beds of Auguste and Emile turned over, and, strangely enough, in an identical manner. After observing this disorder, Madame went to the red room; the door resisted, being obstructed by a heavy armchair. She put it back and continued her inspection. As she went to my study a frame placed inside against the door fell against her legs and she found everything in disorder—prints thrown on the ground, the armchair upside down and heaped with papers, maps, etc.

*January 28.*—We have had a Novena of Masses said at Lourdes. The Rev. Father has made the exorcisms and everything has stopped.

### II. THE HAUNTED HOUSE OF LA CONSTANTINIE

The Haunted House of La Constantinie is another case of a well-authenticated story of a Poltergeist. La Constantinie is a considerable property. The dwelling-house, built on the slope of a little hill, is in the form of a square. The part which contains the front doors is on a ground floor but raised some feet above the ground. It contains a large kitchen running the length of the building. To the right of the kitchen are a drawing-room and bedroom.

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## HAUNTED HOUSES

The personnel of La Constantinie consisted of farm-servants, Mme. Faure, her mother-in-law, aged eighty-five, and a young house-servant of seventeen, Marie Pascarel.

Mme. Faure is a well-educated woman of culture, and directs the administration. She comes of an honourable family.

Her aged mother-in-law appears to have preserved all her faculties.

The young Marie Pascarel is intelligent and self-confident, with easy manners, and respectable. Rather thin, and appears delicate. She has a sleep-walking sister, and her family are considered rather extraordinary people.

The numerous farm-servants take their meals in the kitchen on a solid wooden table. The kitchen contains an oven, an immense fireplace with a little bench on the left and two chairs on the right, and some cupboards and shelves.

The phenomena started in May 1895, with knocks on the wall separating the dining-room from the bedroom of the elder Mme. Faure. On May 21, about 9 A.M., Mme. Faure told her daughter-in-law that her bed seemed to strike the partition. Young Mme. Faure did not attach much importance to this remark, which she put down as a mistake. Next day at the same hour the sound came again at the same place. Young Mme. Faure heard it distinctly. On Friday, the 24th, the noise started afresh in the same room with greater force. The noise was as if the bed hit the partition.

An hour afterwards young Mme. Faure went into her room and found the bedclothes and pillow thrown on the floor. Other disorders occurred in the house. Three empty casks were displaced in the cellar. In another room the bedclothes were strewn on the floor; a statuette of the Virgin and a coffee-pot filled to the brim were trans-

ported from the cupboard to the middle of the room. They were found on the floor beside a crucifix which had been taken down from the wall.

On the Saturday morning three blows were struck on the door of the attic. The Faure ladies and their servant went into the room. The bed was in disorder, the coverings on the floor. The coffee-pot was broken. On returning to the kitchen they heard a frightful commotion. Three sugar-bowls, a dozen cups, photo-frames and engravings were lying, broken on the floor. The three women were very much frightened, for at the moment when all this damage was done, the farm-servants were in the fields and nobody was in the house except the two ladies and their young maid. They were convinced that supernatural things were happening. Visits from their neighbours reassured them a little, but before long the manifestations took place in the presence of the visitors.

Marie Pascarel was kept busy picking up the broken crockery that littered the floor. According to the witnesses, pots, plates, glasses and dishes were taken down from the shelves by invisible hands and thrown on the floor where they broke. A plate was torn from the servant's hands.

On Thursday, May 30, saucepans hanging from pot-hooks in the kitchen chimney were thrown to the ground. About 6 P.M. old Mme. Faure saw her bed move along by itself in her room. Marie Pascarel was with her in the room. About 7 P.M. at supper-time, in the kitchen, pieces of wood fell of themselves on the Faure ladies.

On Friday, May 31, they sent for the M. Delmas Mayor of Objat, a ministerial officer of high respectability. He hesitated to believe that objects could be moved without contact and going into the kitchen placed some plates on the table where there was already a stove-brush. M. Delmas then sat down in front of the fireplace, with

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Mme. Faure on his left. The young servant worked at her duties. Under the eyes of M. Delmas the brush was then violently flung into the fireplace. The servant was at some distance from the table on which the brush had been lying.

The ideas of the Mayor underwent a modification. He found that the movement of objects under his eyes was spontaneous. His surprise gave way to uneasiness when he saw a pair of kitchen bellows which lay on a bench in the fireplace slide along, avoiding the projections due to the legs of the bench, and throw itself with great clatter into the middle of the kitchen.

He immediately had the house cleared. As she was leaving with the Mayor and the Faure ladies, the young Marie Pascarel was hit on the back by a stick 16 inches long, thrown with considerable force.

Hardly had M. Delmas returned to Objat when he was recalled. Fire had broken out at La Constantinie. Marie Pascarel had observed that a thick smoke issued from Mme. Faure's room. On entering the room it was found that it came from the bed of young Mme. Faure. There were no flames and no brazier. Mme. Faure used this singular expression in her account of the episode. "The fire went back into the bed." A phenomenon of this kind had already been observed. Marie Pascarel and the elder of the two ladies had sometimes observed a thick smoke which seemed to issue from the old lady's skirts.

Two days afterwards Marie Pascarel left the service of the Faure ladies and since then the peace of the house has not been troubled.

Does the strangeness of the phenomena related suffice for rejecting them? Persons who contest *a priori* the possibility of these spontaneous movements of material objects will, of course, not be convinced. But it may be

questioned whether it is prudent thus to deny on principle every thing that is inexplicable. Such a negation is not in conformity with the true scientific spirit. We know the natural forces we have learnt to utilize only very imperfectly. Can we maintain that other quite unknown forces do not exist? The contrary is more certain. Nature is infinite and we hardly know it.

In these cases the circumstances which tend to exclude fraud were more numerous and weighty than the opposite ones.

Without going into detail, the witnesses must have really seen what they narrate, from the absence of an intelligible motive, fraud must be ruled out and, if we admit human testimony at all, we must take the phenomena as having actually occurred. The declarations of witnesses so numerous, so truthful, so respectable, would certainly convince in a matter of capital importance a jury and a court of assize.



# THE SHADOW OF A MIDNIGHT

By MAURICE BARING

IT was nine o'clock in the evening. Sasha, the maid, had brought in the samovar and placed it at the head of the long table. Marie Nikolaevna, our hostess, poured out the tea. Her husband was playing Vindt with his daughter, the doctor, and his son-in-law in another corner of the room. And Jameson, who had just finished his Russian lesson—he was working for the Civil Service examination—was reading the last number of the *Rouskoe Slovo*.

"Have you found anything interesting, Frantz Frantzovitch?" said Marie Nikolaevna to Jameson, as she handed him a glass of tea.

"Yes, I have," answered the Englishman, looking up. His eyes had a clear dreaminess about them, which generally belongs only to fanatics or visionaries, and I had no reason to believe that Jameson, who seemed to be commonsense personified, was either one or the other. "At least," he continued, "it interests me. And it's odd—very odd."

"What is it?" asked Marie Nikolaevna.

"Well, to tell you what it is would mean a long story which you wouldn't believe," said Jameson; "only it's odd—very odd."

"Tell us the story," I said.

"As you won't believe a word of it," Jameson repeated, "it's not much use my telling it."

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We insisted on hearing the story, so Jameson lit a cigarette and began:

"Two years ago," he said, "I was at Heidelberg, at the University, and made friends with a young fellow named Braun. His parents were German but he had lived five or six years in America, and he was practically an American. I made his acquaintance by chance at a lecture, when I first arrived; and he helped me in a number of ways. He was an energetic and kind-hearted fellow, and we became great friends. He was a student, but he did not belong to any *Korps* or *Bursenschaft*, as he was working hard then. Afterwards he became an engineer. When the summer semester came to an end, we both stayed on at Heidelberg. One day Braun suggested that we should go for a walking tour and explore the country. I was only too pleased, and we started. On the third night after we had started, we arrived at a village called Salzheim. It was a picturesque little place, and there was a curious old church in it with some interesting tombs and relics of the Thirty Years' War. But the inn where we put up for the night was even more picturesque than the church. It had once been a convent, only the greater part of it had been burnt, and only a quaint gabled house, and a kind of tower covered with ivy, which I suppose had once been the belfry, remained. We had an excellent supper and went to bed early. We had been given two bedrooms, which were airy and clean, and altogether we were satisfied. My bedroom opened into Braun's, which was beyond it, and had no other door of its own. It was a hot night in July, and Braun asked me to leave the door open. I did—we opened both the windows. Braun went to bed and fell asleep almost directly, for very soon I heard his snores.

"I had imagined that I was longing for sleep, but no sooner had I got into bed than all my sleepiness left me.

## THE SHADOW OF A MIDNIGHT

This was odd, because we had walked a good many miles, and it had been a blazing hot day, and up till then I had slept like a log the moment I got into bed. I lit a candle and began reading the small volume of Heine I carried with me. I heard the clock strike ten, and then eleven, and still I felt that sleep was out of the question. I said to myself: 'I will read till twelve and then I will stop.' My watch was on a chair by my bedside, and when the clock struck eleven I noticed that it was five minutes slow, and set it right. I could see the church tower from my window, and every time the clock struck—and it struck the quarter—the noise boomed through the room.

When the clock struck a quarter to twelve, I yawned for the first time, and I felt thankful that sleep seemed at last to be coming to me. I left off reading, and taking my watch in my hand I waited for midnight to strike. This quarter of an hour seemed an eternity. At last the hands of my watch showed that it was one minute to twelve. I put out my candle and began counting sixty, waiting for the clock to strike. I had counted a hundred-and-sixty, and still the clock had not struck. I counted up to four hundred; then I thought I must have made a mistake. I lit my candle again, and looked at my watch: it was two minutes past twelve. And still the clock had not struck.

"A curious uncomfortable feeling came over me, and I sat up in bed with my watch in my hand and longed to call Braun, who was peacefully snoring, but I did not like to. I sat like this till quarter past twelve, when the clock struck the quarter as usual. I made up my mind that the clock must have struck twelve, and that I must have slept for a minute—at the same time I knew I had not slept—and I put out my candle. I must have fallen asleep almost directly.

"The next thing I remembered was waking with a

start. It seemed to me that some one had shut the door between my room and Braun's. I felt for the matches. The match-box was empty. Up to that moment—I cannot tell why—something—an unaccountable dread—had prevented my looking at the door. I made an effort and looked. It was shut, and through the cracks, and through the keyhole, I saw the glimmer of a light. Braun had lit his candle. I called him, not very loudly: there was no answer. I called again more loudly: there was still no answer.

“Then I got out of bed and walked to the door. As I went, it gently and slightly opened, enough to show me a thin streak of light. At that moment I felt that someone was looking at me. Then it was instantly shut once more, as softly as it had been opened. There was not a sound to be heard. I walked on tiptoe to the door and it seemed to me that I had taken a hundred years to cross the room. And when at last I reached the door I felt I could not open it. I was simply paralysed with fear. And still I saw the glimmer through the keyhole and the cracks.

“Suddenly, as I was standing transfixed with fright in front of the door, I heard sounds coming from Braun's room, a shuffle of footsteps, and voices talking low but distinctly in a language I could not understand. It was not Italian, Spanish, or French. The voices grew all at once louder; I heard the noise of a struggle and a cry which ended in a stifled groan, very painful and horrible to hear. Then, whether I regained my self-control, or whether it was excess of fright which prompted me, I don't know, but I flew to the door and tried to open it. Some one or something was pressing with all its might against it. Then I shouted at the top of my voice, and as I shouted I heard the cock crow.

“The door gave, and I almost fell into Braun's room. It was quite dark. But Braun was waked by my shouts

## THE SHADOW OF A MIDNIGHT

and quietly lit a match. He asked me gently what on earth was the matter. The room was empty and everything was in its place. Outside the first greyness of dawn was in the sky.

"I said I had had a nightmare, and asked him if he had not had one as well; but Braun said he had never slept better in his life.

"The next day we went on with our walking tour, and when we got back to Heidelberg Braun sailed for America. I never saw him again, although we corresponded frequently, and only last week I had a letter from him, dated Nijni Novgorod, saying he would be at Moscow before the end of the month.

"And now I suppose you are all wondering what this can have to do with anything that's in the newspaper. Well, listen," and he read out the following paragraph from the *Rouskoe Slovo*:

Samara, II, ix. In the centre of the town, in the Hotel —— a band of armed swindlers attacked a German engineer named Braun and demanded money. On his refusal one of the robbers stabbed Braun with a knife. The robbers, taking the money which was on him, amounting to five hundred roubles, got away. Braun called for assistance, but died of his wounds in the night. It appears that he had met the swindlers at a restaurant.

"Since I have been in Russia," Jameson added. "I have often thought that I knew what language it was that was talked behind the door that night in the inn at Salzheim, but now I know it was Russian."



## A REMINISCENCE

By A. H. SAYCE

THE previous winter I had had a curious experience which Frederic Myers once asked me to put into writing for the Society of Psychical Research, but which from one cause or another I have never hitherto committed to paper.

At the time when my father was settling in Batheaston he was asked by some friends who were leaving their residence in South Wales to inquire if there was any old place to be let furnished, with a good deal of land about it, in the neighbourhood of Bath. My father learned that just such a place happened to be on the market, Tinsbury Court, about midway between Bath and Bristol. Our friends accordingly took it, and shortly afterwards, during the Christmas holidays, my brother Herbert and I paid them a visit. There being no other visitors, we were given the "drab" room, so called from some tapestry that was hanging on the walls. Opposite the door was a mulioned window; between the two, at the northern end of the room, was a fourpost bedstead, in front of which a considerable portion of the southern wall was occupied by a large fireplace with iron dogs, where a fire of logs burnt on the hearth. Between the bedstead and the window was a small room in the thickness of the wall which was fitted up as a dressing-room. The weather was cold and I was accordingly not allowed to leave the house. On a Thursday afternoon when the light was failing I closed my books and went upstairs to prepare myself for dinner while there was still sufficient light to do so with-

## A REMINISCENCE

out the help of a candle. I was standing brushing my hair before the toilet-table which stood in front of the window when I happened to turn to the right and there saw a man standing a few feet away at the entrance of the dressing-room. I can still see him as he stood facing me, with a closely shaven face, fine features, dark-brown hair parted in the middle, and a dark coat buttoned below the chin like an oriental *Stambouli* or a clerical coat. The button was of gold and there was a gold button also on either wrist.

The suddenness of the apparition naturally startled me, and without imagining for a moment that it was anything more than an ordinary individual who had found his way into the house, I rushed downstairs into the morning-room and told my hosts there was a strange man upstairs. I was naturally laughed at, and informed that poring over books indoors day after day had excited my imagination and that the whole thing was merely the result of nerves. By the time dinner was over I had been induced to believe that such was really the case.

The following Sunday I awoke early in the morning. The log-fire was nearly extinct, but there was still sufficient light from it to enable the outline of objects to be discerned. In the dim light I saw a human figure pass to the foot of the bed and there stand for a moment or two between the bedstead and the dying fire. I asked my brother Herbert, who was sharing the bed with me and happened also to be awake, who it was. He, too, saw the figure and replied, "It's only Lizzie—" the daughter of our hosts, whose room was close to ours, and thereupon we both turned round and went to sleep again. In the morning I mentioned to our hostess, Mrs. Boyd, that her daughter had visited our bedroom during the night; she replied "What could she have been doing there?" and

then the matter passed out of our memories until it was recalled to me the following autumn by Mrs. Boyd.

The next event of which I know was a visit paid by a Mrs. Herbert to the house in the spring. On a certain Sunday morning she asked if she might change her room, as she had had an unpleasant experience early that morning. She had seen a man come out of the dressing-room, pass along the side of the bed and then stoop down so as to be concealed by its foot. She jumped out of bed to see who was there, and nothing was visible. The whole story was naturally treated as a dream by those who heard it.

In the following September the married daughter of the Boyds and her husband paid a visit to the Court. A few days later we were lunching there, and I heard from Mrs. Holt a somewhat vivid account of the experiences they had just had. They occupied the "drab" room, and she slept on the side of the bed nearest the dressing-room. Early on the previous Friday morning she was roused from her slumbers by feeling "a cold, clammy hand" laid across her forehead. She opened her eyes, and saw "the dark brown figure of a man hieing away" from her into the dressing-room. She awoke her husband, who told her she had had a night-mare; but she refused to sleep again on that side of the bed. The next night Mr. Holt was rendered sleepless by a toothache and therefore, as he informed his wife, had there been any ghosts about, he must have seen them. By Saturday night, however, his toothache was cured, and his sleep accordingly was sounder than usual. He was startled out of it by feeling the same "cold, clammy hand" as that described by his wife, and, as he opened his eyes, seeing the same figure retreating into the dressing-room. He looked at his watch and found that it was four o'clock. He got out of bed and sponged his face and head with cold water; then returned to the bed and sat up in it for a moment or two.

## A REMINISCENCE

Before he could lie down "the figure" returned from the dressing-room and stood close to his shoulder. He was able to measure it against the window-frame, but I do not remember what he said was the exact height. His description of "the figure," however, agreed exactly with what I had seen, even to the three gilt buttons. While he sat gazing at it, it slowly vanished out of view.

That there was "a ghost" in the Court now began to be noised abroad, and the old servants of our friends threatened to leave them. In the course of the winter, consequently, they gave up the place and took a house elsewhere. From that day to this I have heard nothing more about it or its occupants, ghostly or otherwise.

## BRETON TALES

### I. THE INTERSIGN: L'ONCLE JEAN

*(Told by Marguerite Guerneur of Quimper to Anatole Le Braz. Translated by Brian Rhys.)*

I WAS about twelve years old. We were living then in the little fishing hamlet of Leschiagat, where my father was second officer in the Customs. My mother had a brother, Jean, living with his wife not far from us, at Pont-Labbé, and sometimes I used to go and spend Easter or Christmas at his house, with my girl cousins. I was very fond of this uncle, who always brought me back some souvenir from his voyages, for he was a deep sea sailor, first mate on board the *Virginia*, a vessel of Nantes, sailing the south sea passage. My mother also had a great affection for her brother; she was a little older than he and godmother to him. He wrote to her almost as often as to his wife; and as it happened, a letter had come from him that very day, saying that he was quite well and that the *Virginia* would soon set sail for France.

I remember these details very well, because, as I told you, I was very much interested in anything that had to do with my uncle.

We had eaten supper alone, my mother and I, as my father was on coast duty. The weather was pretty bad, wind and rain together. When it was time for me to go to bed my mother said to me

"Now don't forget Uncle Jean in your prayers."

"I never do," said I.

Indeed it was not often that I missed saying a special



## BRETON TALES

*paternoster* for him, so that he, too, might remember to bring me back some fine present from the country to which he had sailed.

That evening, I did as usual, but, though I could not have said why, as I prayed I felt myself growing very sad, so sad that at last I began to cry.

My mother, coming to my bedside, asked:

"What's the matter with you, sobbing like this? Go to sleep at once: you know that night has come."

As she said this, she pointed to a little window, like the port-hole of a ship which was let into the wall above my head, and through which a square patch of dark sky was plainly to be seen, with clouds passing. I dried my tears and pretended to close my eyes. But as soon as my mother had gone back to her knitting beside the table, I opened my eyes again and went on thinking in the dark.

Outside the wind was blowing in great gusts, but when it died down, you could hear the rustling sound of the rain on the slate roof. I could hear this sound all the more clearly because our house had only the one storey. All of a sudden, it seemed to me that a rain-drop was coming through the plank floor of the loft overhead and falling onto my bedclothes. After the first one, there was another drop, then a third, then five, ten, twenty more, one after another. Drip! Drip! Drip! they came in regular taps. I called my mother.

"What's the matter now?" said she.

"I think the rain's coming through onto my bed."

She passed her hand over my blankets, took the candle to look at the planks above my bed, and found not the slightest trace of damp anywhere. The sound itself had stopped.

"See here," said my mother. "If you go on playing the silly and dreaming about things that aren't there, I'll tell your father when he comes back."

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I was afraid of my father, who had a rough way with him, though at bottom he was kind-hearted, and I promised to be good. But the moment my mother went away, the strange drip . . . drip . . . drip began once more. Where this rain that left no trace was coming from, I couldn't make out, try as I would; and in the end I listened more and more absent-mindedly to it, and even managed to doze off, I think, for I did not hear my father come in.

A sudden roar, like a dam bursting, woke me with a jump. I sat up, with eyes wide open, shivering all over. What I then saw froze me with such horror that to think of it now, after fifty years, makes me turn pale. The window—the little window that was over my head, in the wall—seemed to be shaken by terrific blows. Suddenly, it gave way and a spout of water rushed in through the gaping hole. It poured and poured in. In a flash, I felt the water right over my head; higher and higher it rose, never stopping, clear, deep and green. It felt to me like sitting down on the bottom of the sea. The wall, the planks above, even the wood sides of my box bed, all had gone. Whichever way I looked, I saw nothing but water, water, water! I knew I was in it, like someone drowned who has stayed alive. And you could never imagine how horrible it was.

But there was worse to come.

While I was watching this water piling up, stupid with fright, a man's corpse, half naked, came by, so close that it nearly touched my face. He was stretched out straight, and floating like a log tossed about by the waves. His arms were spread out like a cross, and his legs wide apart. Tattered pieces of red flannelette drawers were held together round his waist by a bit of string! . . . I threw myself back with a violent jerk. My sheets made a loud noise like water gurgling. I thought that the sea was

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going to carry me away after the corpse and I gave a piercing scream to call for help.

My father—I didn't know that he had come back—was by my bed in two strides. I remember that he was still holding his gun, which he had been rubbing up, no doubt, as he did every time that he got home in bad weather. Sure that I was dreaming bad dreams, he shook me with all his strength.

"Wake up, Marguerite!"

"Oh, I'm only too wide awake," I said.

My teeth were chattering and my body streaming with a cold sweat, as if I had actually come out of the water. My father, much perturbed, asked me:

"What's the matter with you? What's come over you? Speak!"

I looked at him with imploring eyes. His voice at once became gentler, and he stroked me, encouraging me:

"Don't be afraid . . . Mother's already told me that you have had queer fancies in your head tonight: tell me what it is; I won't scold you."

I threw my arms round his neck and began to sob against his chest.

"The sea!" I cried. "All the sea was there, in my bed, and a man's body floating in it."

"And what was he like, this man?"

"I don't know. . . . I only saw him from below, and I only noticed one thing, that he was wearing red drawers, like Uncle Jean's."

"Well, little one, it's a sign that Uncle Jean is safe and well. Haven't you heard people say that you always dream what's contrary to the truth?"

"It wasn't a dream," I murmured.

He pretended not to understand.

"Give me one of your hands to hold and go to sleep

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again. I'll stay by you. And so you'll feel safe, eh?"

"Yes, Father."

As I lay quite still, he left me after a quarter of an hour, thinking I was asleep, and went back to my mother. I heard her ask him in a low voice:

"What do you think it was, Yvon?"

"I think that your brother is lost. Because he loved this child especially well, he has chosen to show himself to her. It's his phantom that she has just seen."

"My poor, poor brother! God rest his soul!" said my mother.

And I saw her tears falling like rain on the work she was holding.

Twelve days later, a telegram came from Nantes, from the Company that my uncle worked for as sailor, to announce that a liner from St. Nazaire had come across an empty boat in the southern waters, recognised as one belonging to the *Virginia*. Of the vessel herself nothing was known; she must have struck a reef and gone to the bottom with all hands.

## II. THE DEATH'S HEAD

*(Told by Marie Jeanne Le Vay of Paimpol to Anatole Le Braz. Translated by Brian Rhys.)*

ONE night when Barba Louarn, of Paimpol, had sat late at her spinning, she tired over her task and fell asleep. She was well-nigh seventy years old, the poor old body! . . . Her distaff, slipping from her hands, fell on to the spinning-wheel with a noise that made Barba wake up with a start. She was not a little surprised to see the room was lit with a white light. In the middle of the floor stood a round table on which Barba used to lay the skeins of flax that she had spun; and, on that heap

## BRETON TALES

of skeins she saw a head, a freshly severed head from which the blood was dripping.

This head she recognised as her son's. He was a sailor on board one of the men-o'-war.

The eyes were wide open and were looking at her with unspeakable anguish.

"*Mabic! Mabic!*" (Little one, little one) she cried, clasping her hands; "What's happened to ye, in God's name?"

As soon as the old woman had spoken thus, the head began rolling over the table and went right round it, nine times over.

Then it appeared again above the heap of skeins

"Farewell, mother!" said a voice.

Barba Louarn found herself plunged in darkness once more. The neighbours found her next morning, lying senseless on the floor of the room.

Some time after that, news came that on this very night, at this very hour, her son Yvon Louarn, second boatswain on board the *Redoutable*, had had his head severed from his body in an accident; and as this had happened in rough weather, the head had rolled this way and that on the deck before they could lay hold of it.



## HIS MOTHER'S EYES

By PHILIP MACDONALD

**I**T was dark, and water was everywhere. And mud. Such mud as can only be made from desert dust, the feet of men and horses constantly trampling the same stretch of ground, and four days and nights of incessant sheet-like rain. It was bad enough, this mud and flood and rain, outside the nullah on the level of the desert, but down in the nullah they were, horses and men, over the knees in a thin soupy kind of slush.

This was the second night they had been in this nullah. There were two officers (one a captain), a sergeant-major, two sergeants, four corporals, six lance-corporals who were "number ones" and each in charge of a Vickers, eighteen ordinary gunners, six signallers, two farriers, two officer's servants, and a trumpeter who did everything but trumpet. These were all English or Scotsmen. There were also in the nullah, for this was the half of a Cavalry Machine Gun Squadron, eighty-four Indian native cavalymen, and, of course, one hundred and forty-eight horses, being the mounts of the officers and men together with the gun and pack-carrying animals.

As nullahs went in that particular stretch of desert, this was a large one, and in places it was wide enough for men and a double line of picketed horses, in others scarcely so wide as would hold even a single line of men alone. And so this half squadron were spread, now in lumps, now

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From *Queen's Mate*, by Philip MacDonald, published by the Dial Press.

## HIS MOTHER'S EYES

in a thin straggling line, over some three hundred and fifty of the nullah's four hundred yards.

Although this was the second night they had been in this disconsolate place it seemed to the men that they had been there for a great part of their lives. Somewhere in front of them—perhaps two miles off, perhaps twenty—lay part of a Turkish army. Somewhere behind them was a cavalry division of their own. In some sort, they were in hiding; not from an actual enemy, but from the possibility of one. Their orders had been strict. They had been marching by night for many weeks which had seemed months. They were not—on any account whatsoever—to be visible and so far as they knew, they had not. At first this march-by-night, hide-by-day business had been more amusing than otherwise; but now the rains had begun. They could not cook for fear of the smoke nor be warmed for fear of the flames nor could they have one lamp among them all.

But there they were. And there they had to wait until their fellows caught them up.

At the near end of the nullah, perhaps fifteen yards from where the picket-lines began, there was a crude affair of mackintosh sheets and ropes and ammunition boxes.

Under this travesty of a tent lay Lieutenant Robin Hargreaves asleep and dreaming of his mother. What more natural than that a young soldier, freed by sleep from the gross discomforts of warfare, should dream, peacefully and tenderly, of that gentle lady—his mother?

Unfortunately, however, Lieutenant Hargreaves had dreaded dreaming of his mother—as he so often did when harassed or deadly tired or in pain—far more than he dreaded war's material horrors. For his mother had been peculiar, as his father had found soon after he had married her. He died two months before Robin and his twin sister Magdalen were born. Having been at great labour

and pain to bring the two children into the world, his mother recovered with admirable celerity, and, secured from financial bothers by the inheritance she had achieved, removed herself, without her twins, to foreign parts, whence she did not return until Robin and Magdalen were rising six.

The children had lived all this while in their father's great house under the care of a foster-mother, nurse and a governess. They thought their mother when she returned very lovely to look at, as indeed she was. They had imagined that it would be very pleasant to have her always with them. But in a short time it became apparent that, from their point of view, the only "nice" thing about mother was that she was so "pretty." For the rest they found her one to be feared, with a fear which grew steadily throughout the five years during which she spent perhaps six months of each with them in the big house; grew until from a discomfort it became at the end a terror which hung between them and the pleasant world they had once known.

Mrs. Hargreaves was a firm believer in the wisdom of Solomon; at least she would always quote a remark of this possibly Sadistic old gentleman when taxed with harshness. It was not very often, perhaps, that she was so taxed, for her children, in fearing her, were only following the course adopted by the majority of their seniors. For upon more than one occasion, when one of those gentlemen who, while she was at home, appeared in the house upon visits of varying length, would venture to tax her with harshness, she would reply: "Spare the Rod—" She said "Rod" like that, with a capital letter and a lingering accent.

Not pleasant times, these, for the children. Of the two, it is probable that Robin suffered more. He certainly carried into his after life more vivid mental traces of his

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usage than did Magdalen. Even in that last terrible year (their eleventh) at the end of which, their father's brother having come upon the scene, they were removed to a world of gentleness, and understanding, Robin never yielded, as did Magdalen, so far as to make false admission to falser accusation.

Though his courage kept him up, his imaginative qualities made his life, during that time when his mother swayed it, a thing so devoid of all but queer fancies and terrors that had the possibility of achieving death occurred to him, he might not have lived to sleep and dream, as he did now in the heart of Mesopotamia, of his mother and his boyhood's self.

To-night he was having the worst of the recurrent series of these dreams. This dream was not so much a dream as a repetition of fact. It was so accurate and matter-of-fact, that it became a re-visiting of his boyhood. It was the day when he was promoted from the varying instruments he had hitherto known to a real cane. A slim, heavy, supple thing, almost black in colour.

He stood by the table and opposite him, sat his mother. She was reading a letter, her lovely face quite still and absent, while every now and then she would draw at a cigarette. He could smell the heavy scent of the tobacco. He stood there for *ages*, and where his tummy had been there was only an empty feeling which made one want to be sick. Then his mother looked up with that odd look. Her face was a thin mask, with behind it another face which was moving in a funny sort of way; sometimes its mouth looked hungry, sometimes as if it were smiling queerly. And then his mother spoke to him, talking in that *different* way she always kept for these occasions. Ordinarily—her voice was lovely to listen to; but when he or Magdalen was going to be punished, and while it was going on, she clipped

her words dividing them so that it reminded him of his first reading book, where "Tom-my went for an air-ing in Ken-sing-ton Gar-dens with his Nan-ny."

A damnable dream, for he had physical sensations, not mental substitutes as in most dreams. He smelt that Turkish tobacco, heard his mother's words, felt the draught playing round his body as, in obedience to a careful, clipped command, he took off, with fingers that seemed all thumbs, his knickers and drawers and shirt and stood up in only his vest and stockings. His mouth *was* parched with terror and had an enormous stiff tongue inside it. He pricked his hand on the loose nail of the chair-cover as he bent down with his hands upon it. The cane—the new cane went tap-tap-tap on his left thigh as his mother, in that odd voice, bade him change and re-change his position. He heard the prayer that ran in his head to the rhythm of the tick-tick of the grandfather clock. And he heard himself say awkwardly, because his mouth was so full of tongue: "Mother, please don't be *slow* this time. Please!" He *was* answered by his mother's "Be si-lent!" And then, though it meant "dis-o-bedience" and more punishment, he looked round and (bent over as he was) up into his mother's face. And he saw that over her eyes had come the glossy, polished look they wore at these times. It terrified him, this shiny look. He knew that it meant, for him, pain. There struggled in him a conviction that this look was a shutter pulled down over windows, behind which something awful was going on.

It was here he woke from this dream that was not a dream. He would look round and up, and see her eyes, and then would come a pang of terror so great that oblivion followed; and then awakenness.

Robin Hargreaves had had this dream perhaps two hundred times before. To-night it was more dreadful



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than ever before. He walked with a choked, gasping cry on his lips and became aware that someone was shaking the heel of his riding-boot.

"Who's that? That you, Foster!" Yet he knew it was not Foster's hand that had tugged at his leg.

Through the darkness came a voice from the opening of the shelter: "It's me, sir, Copley. Captain Foster . . ." the voice trailed off into the rain-murmur so that the words lost shape and meaning.

Robin lifted himself slowly, and sat, drawing his legs up beneath him. One of his short spurs pricked his thigh. He must ask a question, must have that last, lost sentence repeated to him. But he dreaded the answer he would get. He tried to speak and found that still, as in the library, his tongue was a huge, leathery thing which beat uselessly against the roof of his mouth.

Outside the voice said urgently, "Sir . . . Captain Foster . . . at once, sir. . . ."

Robin said: "I can't hear what the hell you're talking about, sar'-major. Come in, man. For God's sake come in! Only be careful. Or you'll bring everything down."

There was a shuffle and a heaving in the darkness. On its knees a bulk loomed blacker than the darkness by Robin's blankets. "Sir," said Sergeant-Major Copley, "sir, Captain Foster! I just found 'im. Just now—" He gulped. "What *I* want to know, sir, is 'oo the 'ell done it? It's impossible, sir. Impossible. . . ." The voice trailed off again.

Robin could feel that the man was shaking. This impressed him oddly. The sergeant-major was an old and tried soldier. Robin said: "What's all this about Captain Foster? What're you trying to say, man?" He meant his words to be sharp and curt, but that curious apathy which held him, and that stiff tongue, made them blurred and lazy.

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Copley said, with a wobble in his voice that at any other time would have been comic: "He's dead, sir. I—I—I found him. . . . Just now, sir. I tripped over him. . . . He's a proper mess, sir. . . ."

Robin thought: 'Now how *did* I know he was going to say that?' He said: "What you talking about, sar'-major? 'Re you mad?"

"It's a fac', sir. Proper mess, too!" The bulk shivered. "What'll we do, sir?"

Robin came to himself "Here!" he said, and scrambled to his knees. "Show me. Look alive, now!"

On his knees he wriggled from the tent and stood upright. The rain enveloped him, flooding down over him. He remembered that his waterproof was by his blankets; then forgot it. A heave, a squelching sound, and the dim shape of Copley stood at his shoulder. The shape said: "Other end of the nullah, sir . . . I've not told the men. . . . Not yet. . . . No one seems to 'a seen it but me. . . ."

Robin, lurching and swaying through the treacherous mud with Copley lumbering at his elbow, made his way up the nullah. To see more than arm's length before them was impossible. Foothold was precarious, and sudden stops and turnings were necessary every second or so, as shapes loomed suddenly in their path.

They stumbled on. Robin caught his toe on one of the pegs of the "bilt-up" ropes and fell. Mud—wet, stinking, slimy mud that seemed alive—embraced him. Somehow he fought his way to his feet and scrambled on. The rain washed the slime from his eyes and mouth and nose. He heard the squelch of Copley's footsteps cease. "Hi!" he whispered, "sar'-major! Where are you?"

Copley's voice came to him from the left. "Should be about here, sir. Should be—"

Robin turned and peered in the direction of the voice.

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When he faced this way, the rain drove sullenly into his eyes so that he could not see. A hand—Copley's—plucked at his sleeve. He stumbled on.

Copley's voice said: "Just 'ere, sir. . . . Mind your feet, sir . . . My God, sir! What'll we *do*?"

Robin said: "Shut up, damn you!" He had felt his foot come against something soft. He squatted and felt about him with hands from which the mud still dripped in slimy gobbets. He touched something bulky and wet and yielding and faintly warm—but could only see a dark, huddled mass. He ran his hands about this thing, feeling sticky, muddy cloth and metal buttons. Then, long before they should have, the cloth and the buttons stopped, and Robin's hands found another kind of stickiness than mud. His fingers found this and other things. What they felt made him recoil, fighting a desire to vomit, and, recoiling, lose his balance and sit heavily in a pool of mud.

Copley pulled him to his feet. He stood there, swaying a little. He felt very sick.

Copley said: "You see, sir. . . . What could it a' been, sir?"

Robin said: "I didn't see. . . . Not at all. . . . But I suppose I've got to!" He felt at his pockets with slimed fingers. He said: "Blast! It's in my coat. Here, sar'-major! Slip back and get my Burberry. There's a torch in the pocket. Hurry, now!"

Copley stumbled back the way they had come. Three paces off, the dark outline, just a little blacker than the wet, shining blackness round him, disappeared. The sound of slipping, sloshing, wading feet grew fainter and blending into the thousand sounds that made the silence, left Robin alone.

His head felt light, and his body trembled with the shock of Foster's death. Death it was; but why? Over

the image, of Foster, dead, floated another image, more urgent than that of Foster. A sort of fiery cloud appeared inside his head and yet before his eyes. In and upon it, as a figure shows in a cinematograph film, there appeared, tall and beautiful, his mother. Her eyes were close to his and over them was that glistening sheen. Her lips moved with a dreadful smile. He had the thought looking into those eyes, that perhaps mother might kill him.

He said aloud: "Oh, *don't*, mother! Not any *more!*"

Some one caught him by the arm and he started violently and slipped. His right foot came down upon something soft which sent a shiver up through his leg and spine to his head.

"Must, must, bloody well *must* pull 'self together!" Robin thought, with the front of his mind. He said sharply: "That you, Copley? You've been a hell of a time! Where's the torch!"

"This is Corporal Rodd, sir," said a voice with a strong Yorkshire flavour.

"What the—" Robin began.

"It's the Trumpeter Bell, sir. Ah went ta waake him for turn on guard, sir. He's out, sir. Slit oop belly. Thought Ah'd best report, sir. Heerd you coom by with sergeant-major while back." Through the darkness Robin made out that the huge bulk of Corporal Rodd stood stiffly to attention. He might have been in barracks reporting the loss of two saddle-straps.

"My God!" Robin said. Then. "You told the men?"

"Not rightly toald 'um, sir. Waarned 'um a bit, like. Said they were to be ready in caase o' sooden orders. Didn't want ta get men scairt like, sir."

"Good man. Good man!" Robin said. Then: "There's Copley at last?" Through the dripping darkness came the sound of heavy, slipping feet.

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They waited, Robin fidgeting, the corporal entirely motionless and upon them came Sergeant-Major Copley in a flurry of labouring breath. "Sir, your coat." Into Robin's arms he thrust a bundle of mud-soaked cloth. Robin fumbled for and found his long torch. He said:

"Copley, here's Corporal Rodd. He tells me Trumpeter Bell is dead. He's been stabbed . . . in the stomach. . . ."

"Christ!" The sergeant-major barely repressed a cry. He clutched at the corporal's shoulder. "What's this, Rodd? What d'you—?"

Robin said: "Shut up, Copley. Rodd!"

"Sir?"

"Corporal Rodd," Robin said, "the . . . thing that happened to Trumpeter Bell . . . has happened . . . to Captain Foster."

"Yes, sir."

From behind came the whinny of a horse and close upon it a muddy, sloshing scuffle as the other horses stirred in response. At the noise Robin and Copley started; in ordinary circumstances neither would have noticed it. Rodd remained motionless.

Copley said: in a thick voice which trembled: "What'll we *do*, sir?"

Robin said: "Sar'-major, go up to this end of the nullah and ask the sentry if he's seen anything. Or heard anything. When you've done that, double back to my bivvy. Rodd, do the same with the two sentries up on top there. I'll take the man at my end. Hurry, now!"

He turned to slither back through the lines to his bivouac, caught his foot in something soft, and fell head-long. Even as he fell he knew that he had tripped over the cold, dead body of Foster and for the first time full realisation came. Foster had been a good fellow; he



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was dead, some one had slain him. Some one? Or was it something? And why? And who or what?

As he picked himself up, he seemed to hear Copley's voice, saying: "What'll we *do*, sir?" and then came, for just a flash of time, that fiery cloud in his head and the face and eyes of his mother.

Half-way down the nullah, slightly apart from his fellows and under a shelter, ingeniously contrived, of two mackintosh sheets (one stolen), three rifle-buckets, a saddle and the tripod of number two gun, lay 2543 Gunner Moodie. He was used to constructing for himself adequate shelter where to ordinary eyes existed neither shelter nor the material to make it. He was wet but not so wet as his less experienced comrades. He was also warm, and lay softly upon two doubled blankets and three oat-sacks. Over him was another blanket. At the moment he had the shelter to himself, for his companion, 7865 Gunner Dermott, was on guard.

Gunner Moodie lay upon his back and listened idly to the rain.

Being out of the line of his fellows Gunner Moodie had not been disturbed by Corporal Rodd's warning to "be ready." He lay upon his back on his soft bed in that delicious state between sleep and wakefulness, and pondered idly on the charms of an Eurasian girl he had kept during those brief weeks he had spent in India *en route* for this unkind country that, having scorched him vilely for many months, was now doing her best to drown him.

Gunner Moodie, drifting nearer and nearer to oblivion, was sharply awakened by rain upon his face. Cursing, he struggled to a sitting position and found that half of the second waterproof sheet had been torn loose from its lashing. Again he cursed, then rose to his knees and be-

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gan, not yet properly awake, to make fumbling attempts at repair.

But as he raised his arms there came from somewhere what felt like a hand. This brushed against his face in a greedy, groping way, then closed like an iron clamp over nose and mouth.

Gunner Moodie, a tough, powerful and wise person, sought at once both to tear this leech-like thing from his face and get to his feet. But his efforts were futile. Another hand came, and a great weight, and he was pressed back from his knees until he lay on the ground. Gunner Moodie, almost insensible from lack of air, found time to be afraid, afraid as never before in his life. And now, having him upon his back, one of the hands left his throat to grope down his shirted torso. Desperately Gunner Moodie heaved, felt a slackening in the grip on his nose and mouth, heaved again and felt, first, a searing, ghastly pain in his stomach, and, second, a bitterly sweet and agonising weakness. His life was flowing from him. He made one last despairing effort, an effort to cry out. This should have been easy, for his nose and mouth were now free and the thing which had hurt him seemed to have vanished, but he achieved merely a little bubbling choke. The bitter-sweet languor increased and he felt warm, salt blood flowing in a stream from his mouth. As he lay there he found, without surprise, that the little chee-chee girl was there with him. Prettier than ever, he thought. . . . He tried to stretch out his hand and touch those dimpled breasts. . . . His hand wouldn't move though. . . . And then he rolled over upon his face and darkness enveloped him, and he twitched once and lay still.

In the officer's shelter, Robin Hargreaves squatted by the ammunition box which served him for a table. He clutched his head in his hands and thought. "I could

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think if I could see. It's dark that does it. . . . And that . . . and mother. . . ."

Outside there were squelching, slippery-sounding footsteps, then Copley's voice: "Mr. Hargreaves!"

Robin said: "Come in, man! Come in!"

A black shape loomed, crouching as it crept in, then straightened. "The sentry's seen nothink, sir. Nor 'eard anything. . . ."

Robin said: "Nor's the fellah this end." At last, half to himself: "I should say Arabs. Only I *know* there aren't any," Robin murmured.

Copley said: "No, sir. Buddoo don't get around this part. . . . But then it *must* be, sir . . . 'cos it ain't Johnny. . . . An' if it's not Johnny, it must be Buddoo . . . unless. . . ."

"Unless it's something else. . . . Something we . . . don't know about."

Copley said, with an odd-sounding vibration in his voice, "Don't talk . . . like that, sir . . . I . . . it makes me. . . . What's that, sir? . . . Listen. . . ."

At first there came to their ears merely the aching drumming of the rain. Then, through the drumming, came a fumbling at the frail wall of the shelter. There was a shuffling sound, too, like padded feet.

Beside him, in the dark, Robin heard Copley's breath coming and going in little hissing gasps.

He fumbled in his pocket until the fingers of his left hand closed round his electric torch. With his right hand he half-drew from its holster his revolver.

Suddenly the uncertain, sloshy shuffling changed to heavy, precise steps approaching. Somebody twitched at the horse-blanket over the entrance.

"Who's that?"

The horse-blanket was drawn aside. "Corporal Rodd, sir," said a broad and stolid voice.

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"Blast you—" Robin began, then took hold of himself. "Well, Rodd?"

"T' sentries ha' seen nowt an' heerd nowt, sir. But on way 'ere, sir, Ah lost bearin's an' got out t'line sir, an' tripped o'er anoother of 'em, sir. Gunner Moodie—"

Copley's voice, too high-pitched, said: "What d'yer mean— 'another of 'em?'"

Rodd said: "Stiff. Pardon, sir. Gunner Moodie's out too, sir. Like others. Slit oop belly, sir. Ah lost bearin's again, sir, and landed oop back of 'ere. Else I'd 'a been 'ere sooner, sir." He finished the sentence as if he had more to say.

For a moment Robin felt that this last shock had so stunned his mind that never again would it do anything save listen to the rain on the roof and worry because there was no light. Then, with a gasp like that of a man getting into cold water, he came alive.

He said: "Rodd, go quickly and get all four sergeants and the havildar and tell 'em to come here. Don't make a noise about it. When you've waked 'em, work your way all down the lines and tell every man that—that there's a—a rifle thief somewhere in the nullah. They're not to move but they're to dam' well be awake—wide-awake—and ready for anything. No more cushy warn-ings, see? The time's gone by for that. When you've done all that come back here. And be quick, man; quick!"

But, crouched like a dog's shadow in the door, Rodd made no movement. He said: "Sir, Ah'd like a—"

Robin said: "Blast you! Get off now. Quick!"

"Sir—" came hesitatingly from the crouching shape.

Robin took a step forward: "Will you," he said between his teeth, "bloody well do as you're told? God Almighty! If you don't do what I tell you, bloody quick,

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I'll have your blasted festering carcase under arrest in two minutes! Go on, now. Quick!"

The dark lump in the doorway moved and was gone. Robin heard heavy footsteps slipping and splashing away in the direction of the lines. He turned towards where Copley stood, invisible in the blackness; and with an effort drew the torch again from his pocket. He said: "Sergeant-major, got that map with you?" He sat down, with heavy slowness, upon the upturned ammunition box which served him for a chair.

"Map, sir?" he said, fumbling at his pockets.

Robin said irritably: "Blast it, yes. M—A—P—map. I want to see it. I'm going to move out of this. Just a little way, anyhow. It's dark enough—all hell 'ud never see us."

Copley's voice came to him: "Map, sir . . . You've got it, sir. . . ."

Robin said: "I have *not*, dammit! I lent it you this morning—"

He broke off suddenly, for he had been talking to ward off this nameless fear which had held him, and now, though a moment since he had thought it beaten, had returned with a vigour which brought out an icy sweat. The thing—whatever it was—was *here*. Near him. Within these four little walls.

He felt that another second without light would be unbearable. Throwing caution and discipline to the winds, he thrust his thumb hard against the button of his torch. As the reassuring little ray leapt from the bulb, Robin thought: 'Mustn't let him see I was panicking like that, tripe that I am. . . .'

He said: "Now, *come on*, Copley! That map!" And swung himself round.

The torch fell upon Copley's body as he stood, hands



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still fumbling with inner pockets. Robin, sitting, swept the light up till it lit the man's face.

Robin stared; he shivered; for an instant sat frozen with immobility, then jumped wildly to his feet. It seemed to him that from Copley's face, as it had sprung from darkness into being, there looked at him the eyes of his mother.

He sprang, and as he sprang his right hand came from his holster. The gun twirled until his fingers circled the muzzle.

The torch fell from his left hand, clattered against the box, and went out. Into the darkness Robin swung his right arm with all the force of his fears. Once, twice, and three times, in less, it seemed, than half a second did the heavy butt sink into something which to him seemed to be both very hard and, at the same time, almost soft.

In the darkness there was a sobbing sound, a little flurry of feet, what seemed like an hour's silence, and the sound of a heavy fall.

With trembling legs Robin knelt and groped about in the dark. Shakily he found his torch, then rose.

And in the darkness he stood. . . . "After all," said his thoughts, "you are in a nervous condition. You dreamed of your mother. And, because when you shone a sudden light upon them, a man's eyes seemed to glitter as hers when she was about to torture you, you must kill this man . . . in all probability, an honest man. . . ."

"Oh, God!" said Robin.

Outside came sucking, squelching footsteps. The blanket door was pulled aside. "Sir!" said urgently the voice of Corporal Rodd. "Sir! for t'Loard's soake, sir!"

Robin said, heavily through the darkness, "Yes. . . . You'd better come in. . . ."

"Sir, did—"

"One moment," Robin said. He pressed his thumb on

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the button of his torch. A beam of light fell on the huddled body and upturned face of Copley. A round, dark shadow where no shadow should have been was on his temple. From the shadow dark streaks spread themselves.

Robin said: "I did that."

Rodd knelt by the body. "Out all reet, sir."

"I know." He held the torch steady. His right hand still clutched the revolver-barrel.

Rodd said from the floor: "Thank t'Loard, sir. Ah didn't know ye suspicioned even."

Robin said: "What . . . do . . . you mean?"

"Ah thowt like it was 'im, sir. But Ah coodn't tell, not just now. But Ah went back to Moodie, sir—disobeyin' t'oorders, sir—an' Ah ungripp'd fingers an' looked in reet 'and, sir. An' Ah foond this." He held up a small thing which glittered. "Ah've thwot," he said, "for loang time, that 'e were goin' off 'ead like. Foony look in eyes, 'e 'ad. Boot Ah didn't know till now."

In a mist, Robin bent and peered. On the palm of Corporal Rodd lay a little shining crown of brass, the badge from a squadron-sergeant-major's collar. And on the right wing of the twisted body's collar was a newly-rent hole.

Rodd said: "In struggle like. . . ." He went on. "An' 'ere's what 'e dunnum with. . . ." His hand came away from the dead man's waist with a long, curved, Arab knife whose blade shone half-dry, half-wet in the beam of Robin's torch.

"'Omicierdal manniac!" said Corporal Rodd.

Robin was silent. His throat felt like spongy leather.

Rodd said: "Boot 'ow did *you* know, sir?" with fresh wonder in his tone.

"Oh," Robin said wearily, "he . . . he gave himself away."

# FROM THE LOOM OF THE DEAD

By ELIA W. PEATTIE

WHEN Urda Bjarnason tells a tale all the men stop their talking to listen, for they know her to be wise with the wisdom of the old people, and that she has more learning than can be got even from the great schools at Reykjavik. She is especially prized by them here in this new country where the Icelandmen are settled—this America, so new in letters, where the people speak foolishly and write unthinking books. So the men who know that it is given to the mothers of earth to be very wise, stop their six part-singing, or their jangles about the free-thinkers, and give attentive ear when Urda Bjarnason lights her pipe and begins her tale.

She is very old. Her daughters and sons are all dead, but her granddaughter, who is most respectable, and the cousin of a physician, says that Urda is twenty-four and a hundred, and there are others who say she is older still. She watches all that the Iceland people do in the new land; she knows about the building of the five villages on the North Dakota plain, and of the founding of the churches and the schools, and the tilling of the wheat farms. She notes with suspicion the actions of the women who bring home webs of cloth from the store, instead of spinning them as their mothers did before them; and she shakes her head at the wives who run to the village grocery store every fortnight, imitating the wasteful

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American women, who throw butter in the fire faster than it can be turned from the churn.

She watches yet other things. All winter long the white snows reach across the gently rolling plains as far as the eye can behold. In the morning she sees them tinted pink at the east: at noon she notes golden lights flashing across them; when the sky is grey—which is not often—she notes that they grow as ashen as a face with the death shadow on it. But at these things she looks only casually. It is when the blue shadows dance on the snow that she leaves her corner behind the iron stove, and stands before the window, resting her two hands on the stout bar of her cane, and gazing out across the waste with eyes which age has restored after four decades of decrepitude.

The young Icelandmen say:

"Mother, it is the clouds hurrying across the sky that make the dance of the shadows."

"There are no clouds," she replies, and points to the jewel-like blue of the arching sky.

"It is the drifting air," explains Fridrik Hallderson, he who has been in the Northern seas. "As the wind buffets the air, it looks blue against the white of the snow. 'Tis the air that makes the dancing shadows."

But Urda shakes her head, and points with her dried finger and those who stand beside her see figures moving, and airy shapes, and contortions of strange things, such as are seen in a beryl stone.

"But Urda Bjarnason," says Ingeborg Christianson, the young wife with the blue-eyed twins, "why is it we see these things only when we stand beside you and you help us to the sight?"

"Because," says the mother with a steely flash of her old eyes, "having eyes ye will not see!" Then the men laugh. They like to hear Ingeborg worsted, for did she

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not jilt two men from Gardar, and one from Mountain, and another from Winnipeg?

Not even Ingeborg can deny that Mother Urda tells true things.

"Today," says Urda, standing by the little window and watching the dance of the shadows, "a child breathed thrice on a farm at the West, and then it died."

The next week at the church gathering, when all the sledges stopped at the house of Urda's granddaughter, they said it was so—that John Christianson's wife, Margaret, never heard the voice of her son, but that he breathed thrice in his nurse's arms and died.

"Three sledges run over the snow towards Milton," says Urda; "all are laden with wheat, and in one is a stranger. He has with him a strange engine, but its purpose I do not know."

Six hours later the drivers of three empty sledges stopped at the house. "We have been to Milton with wheat," they said, "and Christian Johnson here carried a photographer from St. Paul."

Now it stands to reason that the farmers like to amuse themselves through the silent and white winters. And they prefer above all things to talk or to listen, as has been the fashion of their race for a thousand years. Among all the story-tellers there is none like Urda, for she is the daughter and granddaughter and the great-granddaughter of story-tellers. It is given to her to talk, as it is given to John Thorlaksson to sing—he who sings so, as his sledge flies over the snow at night, that the people come in the bitter air from their doors to listen, and the dogs put up their noses and howl, not liking music.

In the little cabin of Peter Christianson, the husband of Urda's granddaughter, it sometimes happens that twenty men will gather about the stove. They hang their bear-



skin coats on the wall, put their fur gauntlets underneath the stove, where they will keep warm, and then stretch their stout, well-covered legs to the wood fire. The room is fetid; the coffee steams eternally on the stove; and from her chair in the warmest corner Urda speaks out to the listening men, who shake their heads with joy as they hear the pure Icelandic flow in sweet rhythm from between her lips. Among the many, many tales she tells is that of the dead weaver, and she tells it in the simplest language in all the world . . . language so simple that even great scholars can find no simpler, and the children crawling on the floor can understand.

“Jon and Loa lived with their father and mother far to the north of the Island of Fire, and when the children looked from their windows they saw only wild scaurs and jagged lava rocks, and at a distance, the deep gleam of the sea. They caught the shine of the sea through an eye-shaped opening in the rocks, and all the long night of winter it gleamed up at them, like the eye of a dead witch. But when it sparkled and began to laugh, the children danced about the hut and sang, for they knew the bright summer time was at hand. Then their father fished, and their mother was gay. It is true that even in the winter and the darkness they were happy, for they made fishing nets and baskets and cloth together,—Jon and Loa and their father and mother,—and the children were taught to read in the books, and were told the sagas and were given instruction in part-singing.

“They did not know there was such a thing as sorrow in the world for no one had ever mentioned it to them. But one day their mother died. Then they had to learn how to keep the fire on the hearth, and to smoke the fish and make the black coffee. And also they had to learn how to live when there is sorrow at the heart.

“They wept together at night for lack of their mother’s

## FROM THE LOOM OF THE DEAD

kisses, and in the morning they were loathe to rise because they could not see her face. The dead cold eye of the sea watching them from among the lava rocks made them afraid, so they hung a shawl over the window to keep it out. And the house, try as they would, did not look clean and cheerful as it had used to do when their mother sang and worked about it.

"One day when a mist rested over the eye of sea, like that which one beholds on the eyes of the blind, a greater sorrow came to them, for a stepmother crossed the threshold. She looked at Jon and Loa, and made complaint to their father that they were still very small and not likely to be of much use. After that they had to rise earlier than ever, and to work as only those who have their growth should work, till their hearts cracked for weariness and shame. They had not much to eat, for their stepmother said she would trust to the gratitude of no other woman's child and that she believed in laying up against old age. So she put away the few coins that came to the house and bought little food. Neither did she buy the children clothes, though those that their dear mother had made for them were so worn that the warp stood apart from the woof, and there were holes at the elbows and little warmth to be found in them anywhere.

"Moreover, the quilts on their beds were too short for their growing length, so that at night either their purple feet or their thin shoulders were uncovered, and they wept for the cold, and in the morning, when they crept into the larger room to build the fire, they were so stiff they could not stand straight, and there was pain at their joints.

"The wife scolded all the time, and her brow was like a storm sweeping down from the North-west. There was no peace to be had in the house. The children might not repeat to each other the sagas their mother had taught them, nor try their part-singing, nor make little doll

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cradles of rushes. Always they had to work, always they were scolded, always their clothes grew thinner.

“‘Stepmother,’ cried Loa one day—she whom her mother had called the little bird, ‘we are cold because of our rags. Our mother would have woven blue cloth for us and made it into garments.’”

“‘Your mother is where she will weave no more cloth,’ said the stepmother and she laughed many times.

“All in the cold and still of the night, the stepmother wakened, and she knew not why. She sat up in her bed, and knew not why. She knew not why, and she looked into the room, and there, by the light of a burning fish’s tail—’twas such a light the folk used in those days—was a woman weaving. She had no loom, and shuttle had she none. All with her hands she wove a wondrous cloth. Stooping and bending, rising and swaying, with motions beautiful as those the Northern Lights make in a mid-winter sky, she wove a cloth. The warp was blue and mystical to see; the woof was white, and shone with its whiteness, so that of all the webs the stepmother had ever seen, she had seen none like to this.

“Yet the sight delighted her not, for beyond the drifting web, and beyond the weaver she saw the room and furniture—aye, saw them through the body of the weaver and the drifting of the cloth. Then she knew—as the haunted are made to know—that ’twas the mother of the children come to show her she could still weave cloth. The heart of the stepmother was cold as ice, yet she could not move to waken her husband at her side, for her hands were as fixed as if they were crossed on her dead breast. The voice in her was silent, and her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth.

“After a time the wraith of the dead woman moved toward her—the wraith of the weaver moved her away—and round and about her body was wound the shining

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cloth. Wherever it touched the body of the stepmother, it was as hateful to her as the touch of a monster out of sea-slime, so that her flesh crept away from it, and her senses swooned.

"In the early morning she awoke to the voices of the children, whispering in the inner room, as they dressed with half-frozen fingers. Still about her was the hateful, beautiful web, filling her soul with loathing and with fear. She thought she saw the task set for her, and when the children crept in to light the fire—very purple and thin were their little bodies, and the rags hung from them—she arose and held out the shining cloth, and cried:

"'Here is the web your mother wove for you. I will make it into garments.' But even as she spoke the cloth faded and fell into nothingness, and the children cried:

"'Stepmother, you have the fever!'

"And then:

"'Stepmother, what makes the strange light in the room?'

"That day the stepmother was too weak to rise from her bed, and the children thought she must be going to die, for she did not scold as they cleared the house and braided their baskets; and she did not frown at them but looked at them with wistful eyes.

"By fall of night she was as weary as if she had wept all day, and so she slept. But again she was awakened and knew not why. And again she sat up in her bed and knew not why. And again, not knowing why, she looked and saw a woman weaving cloth. All that had happened the night before happened this night. Then, when the morning came, and the children crept in shivering from their beds, she arose and dressed herself, and from her strong box she took coins, and bade her husband go with her to the town.

"So that night a web of cloth, woven by one of the best

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weavers in all Iceland, was in the house; and on the beds of the children were blankets of lamb's wool, soft to the touch and fair to the eye. After that the children slept warm and were at peace; for now, when they told the sagas their mother had taught them, or tried their part-songs as they sat together on the bench, the step-mother was silent. For she feared to chide, lest she should wake at night, not knowing why, and see the mother's wraith."



# DREAM FULFILMENT

*(A True Story)*

By EDWARD J. O'BRIEN

## THE SMALL BOY

AS long as he could remember, the boy had been visited by a recurrent dream. When he awoke, what had happened would not always be clear, and the events which had formed its incidental framework had often faded, but the picture was always the same, and was as real to him as the sunlight stealing in through the shuttered window or the golden clock on the mantel in front of him that shone with the laughing effulgence of a new day. He associated it oddly with the curious pungent atmosphere of the room, faintly recalling the odor of a gas stove burning on Sunday mornings when the street was more still than on other days, and one did not get out of bed until nine o'clock.

He would lie there through the early hours of the morning and hear the sound of footsteps below the bow-window from which as he dressed he saw servant girls returning in the clear air from eight o'clock Mass. Their feet rang on the sidewalk with a sharp clink that was different from the sound on other days, and everything seemed clearer than usual, as if the stillness cleansed the city of all the soiled tumult of the week. There was fresh clothing beside his bed, and after his mother had bathed him, he laughed at the cool freshness of his undershirt as she slipped it over his glowing little body. He never used to think about his dream in those days, for it

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was only another friend like his mother, so familiar that he accepted it happily and turned from it to the more absorbing interest of breakfast and the preparation for walking through the spring morning to church and home again.

Once he woke up crying as if his heart would break, and he called to his mother. But she did not hear him, and the sunlight dazzled his eyes, so that he began to open and shut them and watch the shining tears on his eyelids twinkle with color and disappear. This interested him so much that he forgot what had made him cry, and he could not remember what had happened in that strange world to frighten him.

But the landscape remained, and it reminded him of his summer in the country, and how long the road was that day when he ran away from his mother and started all alone in his bare feet to walk home to Boston and the room with the golden clock and the shuttered windows. Somehow there was a road like that in his dream, but he never remembered having seen the rest of that picture, and that was what he couldn't understand.

When his mother opened the door a little later, she was surprised to find him sitting up in bed with his head bent forward and resting on his hand gazing with a puzzled wonder at the wall. She spoke to him softly, but he did not seem to know that she was looking at him, and so she stole away and left him dreaming and trying to recapture the mystery of that scene which eluded his memory.

But it wouldn't come back and so he turned with a sigh to the window and watched the big policeman on the corner go to an iron box and ring a bell, and then, twirling his stick, stalk majestically around the corner and disappear. Then a cat on a doorstep began to wash its face, and that reminded him that it was time to get

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up and dress, and go down to breakfast, the odor of which crept invitingly up the stairs. . . .

One day when he was three or four years old his mother took him for a walk through the Public Garden. The warm sunlight laughed around him, caressing his face and, slipping through his white clothing ran over his body, so that he thought of the fire before which he stood after his bath while his mother dried him. But soon he forgot everything but the sound of the electric cars and the hurrying feet of children pattering down the street on the shining brick sidewalk, and he followed with wistful eyes a little girl, walking slowly with her nurse, and clutching the cord of a red balloon that floated beckoningly toward him.

Pretty soon they came to the corner of the street, and the big policeman strode over to him and his mother, and took him by the hand to lead him across. He was a little bit afraid at first, but the policeman smiled, and he clutched his big warm hand firmly and looked up into his eyes. He liked his wonderful helmet and the brass buttons of his uniform, and the way all the carriages stopped when he held up his hand. It must be fine to be a policeman. When he was a man, he, too, would wear a big helmet.

Then the policeman said good-bye, and his mother thanked him, and he waved his hand and looked backward, but all he could see was the policeman's back and the big stick in his belt and the shiny helmet.

He did not say anything for a long time. They had entered the Public Garden, following the little girl with the red balloon. But she went down another path with her nurse, and he did not see her any more. He wondered if policemen ever carried red balloons. That policeman's face was just like a big red balloon. He puffed out his own cheeks and felt them with his hands. They

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weren't very big, somehow. He guessed it was because he was only a little boy.

He saw the swanboat swimming over the willowy pond, with little boys sitting in it holding on tight, and a man behind on the swan's back moving his feet up and down as if he were riding a tricycle. He, too, wanted to ride on the bird across the water to the other side. He asked his mother if the swan would come over to him and give him a ride. She said yes, if he was good, but he must give a penny to the man who sat behind and told the swan where to go. And then he must hold on tight.

So they walked down to the swanboat, and he gave the man a penny, and his mother gave him another penny, and then they sat down on the swan's back and floated away. It was shivery: they glided along so slowly, and the water seemed to be running away as if it were scared. But he wasn't afraid,—not very much, anyway,—and he looked behind to see if the man was still there.

The willows stole past one by one, and each willow nodded a good-morning to him, and looked at its own face in the glassy water. Two of them whispered together and pointed to him, and then laughed. So he laughed too, and looked up into the face of his mother. But her eyes were far away, though her arm was around his neck. It felt nice and warm. He was sleepy, and he was floating away, way off into the sky.

The willows were all around him now, and there were other little shining trees with silver leaves, that curled and whispered in the breeze, just as his hair curled and laughed upon his cheek. And he was far away, and all alone in a green field with one white butterfly. And the world went round and round.

There was a little scolding brook running by, and he must follow it, and see where it was going. The willows knew, for it told them as they leaned over it with their

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rustling hair. And the butterfly knew and fluttered on softly. He followed the path of its white wings till he came to a wood, and the trees opened in front of him when he went in, and then closed behind. The sun laughed over his shoulder and urged him on. There was a secret there which it wanted to tell him, and he was getting nearer and nearer to it every minute. It was just around the turn in the path, he knew, behind those trees.

Then his heart beat softly with wonder, as he turned around. High up in the sky between two tall green trees, he saw a Face. It smiled from two brown eyes, as deep as anything, just for a second before it disappeared. It did not say a word, but he knew it had wanted to speak. If he could only see it again, it would tell him a wonderful secret.

Just then two sparrows flew out from behind a tree, scolding and chasing each other round and round. He wondered where he was, but looking up he saw his mother smiling at him. She said that he had been asleep, just for a tiny moment, and as he looked around he saw that the swan had brought them safely across to the other shore. . . .

He would lie awake dreaming of the Face he had seen in the Public Garden, and trying to find it once more in the curling embers of the dying fire which flickered and made strange pictures on the ceiling. But somehow he could not seem to remember just how it had looked, though there was a laughter in the Eyes of it which was like something he had always known. He would watch for that Face everywhere, and perhaps some day he would see it again.

And so he used to look into the face of every one who came to see his mother, hoping that those Eyes would greet him once more with the same familiar laughter, and



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tell him the secret which he knew was meant for him alone. But he never saw those Eyes, however much he sought for them, and after a time they dimmed in his memory, and he only thought of them now and then on a warm sunny afternoon.

He woke one morning in May with the golden sunlight flooding the room and singing in his heart a summons that he did not understand. He remembered the Public Garden as soon as a robin began to sing under his window. He must hurry there after breakfast on his new velocipede. Even then it might be too late. The robin kept singing: "Come quick! The Sun is laughing in the sky. Come quick! The Sun is laughing in the sky." It was Saturday and he did not have to go to kindergarten.

He didn't want to eat his porridge, he was in such a hurry. Supposing he should get there just a minute after it was all over. He wondered what it was that he was going to see.

Charles Street was full of other children going to the Public Garden. It was too early yet to go barefooted, but he saw a little colored girl hurrying along with her shoes and stockings in her hand, and he wished that he was a colored boy, so that nobody would say anything to him if he took his shoes and stockings off. He couldn't, though, and anyway he had his velocipede.

Pretty soon he came to the Public Garden, but the robin had flown away and he did not know exactly where to go. There were so many paths, and they all looked promising. He decided to take the path that led to the swanboats, if he could find it, and meanwhile he pedalled along slowly, looking around everywhere in case something wonderful should happen.

He saw an old man with a white beard and a big straw hat raking the path, and he asked him, please, where was the secret place. The old man stopped raking and

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scratched his head as if he were puzzled. Then he told him to keep straight ahead till he came to the tulips, and then to follow the white butterflies till he came to the cave. The secret was in that cave, but he must never tell it. He thanked the old man with the white beard and the big straw hat, who went back to his raking. He knew that old man, and could trust him. His name was Mr. Costello, and he came from the Arran Islands.

It was just as Mr. Costello had said. He went straight ahead till he came to the tulips, and there were the white butterflies flitting in and out of their chalices, drinking honey, he supposed, and making butter. When they saw him they flew off a little way till he followed them, and then they fluttered a little farther.

He kept riding round and round after them until he was very tired and sleepy. Still he had not come to any cave. Mr. Costello had not told him that it was such a long way to the secret place. Just as he was getting discouraged, one of the butterflies fluttered down and alighted on a green bench under a tree, and hung there lifting its wings a little. The poor white butterfly was tired, too. They could rest a bit. He sat down on the bench. He was so sleepy. He watched the sunlight laughing in the leaves. It came nearer and nearer. It touched his shoe. It was climbing up his trousers. It was laughing on his coat. It touched his face.

It was another Face smiling into his eyes.

He came home weeping to his mother. But he did not tell her why. He was so happy. . . .

Not long afterwards his mother took him for a walk into the country. They rode for a long time in the open cars, and the breeze, slipping by, curled in his hair and touched him with its cool fingers very gently. He was sorry at first when they came to the end of the ride, but soon they entered a deep green wood and followed a

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shady path that wound and wound until he wondered if it had any end. He could see nothing but tall white birches bowing like ladies to one another, and there was no sound but the whispering of the wind as it stirred the leaves of the wood. Little sunbeams filtered slowly down through the trees and patterned changing pictures upon the ground. And his mother let him run ahead and told him to see if he could catch the sunbeams before they fell. Little golden drops of sunlight shimmered in his hair. His body was a nest of singing stars. He took off his shoes and stockings, and watched the sunlight playing hide and seek with him. It was warm under his feet.

After they had gone a long way, he heard a strange humming music in the air. His mother told him that it was running water, and that they would catch up with it if they ran. He thought it was a race, and began to run very fast. Soon he was out of breath, but just then he saw it shining through the trees, and heard it calling to him ever so loudly. "White feet, white feet, come unto my waters. White feet, white feet, run over my sands."

It seemed to him that he had heard it always, a cool familiar voice that had called him long ago. It was as soft as the voice of his mother and as tender. It made him sleepy, lulling him with its music, singing the same words over and over again. He was so happy that he wanted to cry. But he was ashamed to let his mother see him.

She told him that he might play in the brook if he did not go too far, and she sat down beside the path and watched him as he approached the singing water like an old friend. He sat down on the mossy bank and dipped his feet in the running stream. It ran by like the wind in the open cars and whispered to him. But he could not understand now what it was saying. It spoke so slowly and ran away before he could ask it a question.

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There was a little sandbar just beyond him on the other side, and he watched a robin sipping water with his shining beak and then curving his head back and closing his eyes for happiness. The robin did not see him, and he kept very still. Perhaps if he did not stir, it would hop closer and tell him what the brook was saying. But the robin spread his wings suddenly and flew away.

He was listening now, wrapped in leaves and sunlight, listening to the water, motionless and waiting. At first, it was music only, strange old water music, as old as the world, but quiet, new and cool. And then, after a little, he could distinguish words, as the current rippled past his feet, soft wise words, secret whispers like an undertone of wonder. "Watch for the Face in the dream. Listen for the Voice in the air. Watch for the Face in the dream. It is coming to you some day. Remember the Voice in the air. Remember the secret it whispers. Watch for the Face in the dream. Remember the smile in its Eyes." And then he heard only the bubbling music once more, and the sunlight was gone, and the water seemed very cold.

When he got home, he did not tell these things to his mother. . . .

And one summer night, after a day of sunlight, the dream came. He was in a strange and beautiful country, standing under a group of Balm of Gilead trees, which shivered in the frosty morning light. He had come down the steps of an old weatherbeaten house close to a little white church, and found himself on a terrace facing the road. Three short series of crumbling wooden steps led down under the Balm of Gilead trees to the old red gate that always swung outwards to the dusty ribbon of road. He went down the steps and crossed the road to the wil-

lows beside the brook, and there were three stepping-stones.

After crossing the brook, a winding field path led through the grain ascending to a spruce wood. The ever-greens beckoned him onward up the hill, and then down again, following the cattle track to a warm hill pasture. Now he could smell the sea and its salt fragrance with that of the clover. Sunlight poured over him, and the warm earth glowed under his bare feet, as he strode erect and happy down to the end of the field path on the edge of the great red cliffs.

He was standing there with the sea below him, singing a thunderous song of adoration. There in the west the Face shone, lonely, transcendent, immortal, and a Voice spoke softer than rain in an April sky: "Follow Me down the road when I shall call you. Follow Me home when you see the road before you!" Far away it seemed, and very still, before it ceased on the wind of twilight. . . .

He was sleeping peacefully when his mother called him.

### THE YOUTH

Twelve years later the little boy had grown up. Having come to care for Celtic poetry, he sought a place where he might learn Scottish Gaelic. He was invited through the kind offices of an old family friend to spend a summer in Northern Nova Scotia with a Catholic priest who had offered to teach him the language. As the train drew into the town of Antigonish, a tall grave silent man came forward to meet him. There was some constraint on both sides, and little was said. Late in the afternoon they drove westward, rumbling into the sunset while the shadows lengthened on the hills. Soon all was black and they entered a deep fir forest.



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With the darkness their shyness dropped and they talked to each other of Gaelic poetry, of Petrarch, of ghosts, and of holy places. And in the thick forest just as the moon arose, his new friend began to recite the Apocalypse. Every moment their destination seemed nearer, and after twelve miles they reached the coast at a place called Malignant Cove. Then four miles of slow ascent by the moaning sea, and a quick drop into a cup of the hills. The creak of a gate, and a walk up a dark avenue of trees. The moon was now hidden in cloud, and the youth could not see where his feet went stumbling. They entered an old wooden house, and the door closed behind them. The spurt of a match, an oil lamp, and he was home. The walls closed around him, and the priest smiled grimly. He showed him his room, said good-night, and left him alone.

As he lay in bed that night, with the moon shining in on his face and the distant sea drumming mournfully on the land, a strange sense of recognition stole over him. He did not sleep that night, but lay waiting exultantly. The morning would show him a place where he knew that he must have been before.

Early next morning, just as the sun arose, he stole out of the house and stood upon the veranda. And then a wonderful thing happened which did not surprise him.

He was in a strange and beautiful country, and before him shone a group of Balm of Gilead trees, which shivered in the frosty morning light. He came down the steps of the old weatherbeaten house, which stood close to a little white church, and found himself on a terrace facing the road. Three short series of crumbling wooden steps led down under the Balm of Gilead trees to an old red gate that swung outwards to the dusty ribbon of road. He went down the steps and crossed the road to the willows beside the brook, and there were three stepping stones.

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After crossing the brook, he could see a winding field path that led through the grain ascending to a spruce wood. The evergreens beckoned him onward up the hill, and then down again, following the cattle track to a warm hill-pasture. Now he could smell the sea and its salt fragrance mingling with that of the clover. Sunlight poured over him, and the warm earth glowed under his bare feet, as he strode erect and happy down to the end of the field path on the edge of the great red cliffs.

He stood there with the sea below him, singing a thunderous song of adoration. He had come to the place of his boyhood's dream. He had stumbled home.

What followed has not been written.

# THE BAROMETER

By VIOLET HUNT

*I am not fond of expecting catastrophes but there  
are cracks in the world. . . .*

SYDNEY SMITH TO MISS MARTINEAU

THERE existed a few years ago, in the Yorkshire wolds, a state of affairs in which the barometer was more consulted than the Bible, and the only barometer in the district hung in the hall of the Vicarage and belonged to the parson, who scanned it daily and out of its abstruse lettering gave no hope to his pining household. The relentless needle stood ever at "Set Fair," and the terrible drought, which had already lasted for six whole weeks, continued. The dreary sheet of sky overhead stretched its marble-blueness over the baked brown earth that lay beneath, parched and cracked and yawning for rain. In between the rift set apart for their habitation, walked sad human beings, sighing and complaining, full of vague physical uneasiness and stress of longing.

The Church and Vicarage of Barmoor, and the few cottages to which it ministered, made the only break in the wilderness of moorland that stretched away for miles to Pickering on the one side and Danby Moor on the other. Three trees grew near the sturdy stone Vicarage: the boughs of one hung over the roof of the kitchen and lean-to, and made a landmark over the moor. In the early spring they had been fine, springing, bending clumps of verdure. Now, heavy and disconsolate they hung, the

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brown semblance of leaves. A little beck ran at the bottom of the parson's garden, but it was now all but dry. Everything was dried and wasted except the heather which sprouted and thickened and browned under the desolating shine of the sun, while the air just above it quivered with refraction.

"The air is dancing!" cried the parson's boys lying in the thick tufts and looking towards the low hot ridges that bounded their part of the moor to the north.

Later on it grew so much hotter that the sun was veiled in mist, and the air did not dance any more, but stood still with weariness, so the children said, again. A lighted candle, said Hannah, held in the kitchen garden, flared straight up, like a pillar. . . .

The children tried it—they tried everything—everything that was permissible under the strict system of Vicarage discipline—to amuse themselves, in these days, when the elders were too tired and cross to undertake to keep children occupied. They wandered about the garden together, their arms awkwardly linked round each other's shoulders, dragging their feet along the cinder paths in an irritating unison. They stood now, in their baggy little home-made clothes, on the path that led down the kitchen garden, bordered with feeble flowers. It was only a border; the middle patch of ground was, perforce, devoted to useful vegetable cultivation. The living of Barmoor was not a rich living, and the Reverend Matthew Cooper, its incumbent, stood very low in position, birth and education.

His gardener, who was also the sexton, was digging the potatoes for early dinner. He grunted while he dug, and his back was turned to the children, who watched, with a fascination born of ennui, the turn of the fork and the roll of the loose mold, and the horny hand that came down every now and then and gathered up the little

## THE BAROMETER

brown balls and flung them into a basket. Saunders was careless, and let several potatoes roll back into the furrow, out of the eight or so that each turn of the fork should yield. . . .

"Oh, Saunders, look, ye've missed one!" piped the youngest child.

"Happen I have, Master John," replied the old man, crossly. "It's ower hot to be fashed!"

The child sighed.

"Won't it really rain soon, Saunders dear?" he asked as he had asked a hundred times since the drought began.

He had heard so much lately of this wonderful rain that might come and heal all their ills and make the world a pleasant place to live in again. Child-like, he had forgotten what rain was like, and how he always hated it since it kept him indoors and spoiled his play.

"Happen it may, happen it mayn't!" muttered the old servant sulkily. With a sudden access of spite, he added, "Losh me, didn't the master pray for it i' church last Sunda'? But some folks has no influence with the Almighty. A'm sayin' that the Lord ought to do it for His ain sake—His bonny garden's fair perished for the want of a little kindly moisture."

"I think it will rain soon!" said the youngest child again gravely. In his blue eyes was something of the rapt look of a visionary.

"Well, it doesna' look much like it," grumbled the old fellow, pointing up with his fork to the sky that hung above, a wall of greyness, and coming very close to earth, somehow. "What for suld it rain, think'st tha'?"

"Because it must in the end," replied the child sturdily. "It wants to so badly. It's like me, when I want to cry and can't. Oh, Saunders, there's another potato you've left. What a lot you miss!"



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"Gan awa'! Gan awa'!" said Saunders impatiently, "and let me get done. Gan awa' an tew Hannah!"

He shook his pitchfork at them with playful savagery, and they turned away.

"Listen, Willie," said the child called John, taking his brother's arm, and leading him towards the kitchen, a low, one-storied outhouse attached to the house, overshadowed by the biggest of the elm trees. "Listen, Willie; I think the sky is like a great wall, very thick, and yet very brittle. There's all sorts of queer things going on the other side of it, that we can't see."

"Tell us," said the elder boy interested in the younger, as usual.

"There's great bulls roaring, and sparks flying, like in Hobby Noble's forge, and such a noise! Willie, if there come a big hole in the wall; we shall see—" His eyes dilated; he squeezed his brother's hand. . . .

"Hout!" said Willie. "I don't care for that story much. Let us go in and bide with Hannah a bit."

The Vicarage rooms were damp and insufficiently lighted, but the Vicarage kitchen was bright and pleasant. Hannah's lime and marl floor was freshly washed, her copper vessels as bright as the mirror in Mrs. Cooper's best bedroom; but in spite of all these signs of previous activity the girl now was sitting in a limp and weary attitude, her knees apart and a great bowl of peas between them, which she was "podding" for dinner. Her eyes were heavy; her big lump of flaxen hair hung on one side of her head; her clumsy red hands moved among the stout green pods lazily and inattentively. "Oh, deary me!—a deary me!" she murmured to herself at short intervals. . . .

"Now, bairns!" She roused herself as the two slunk in. "I've not time for none of you. Gan awa' and play, there's good childer!"

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"Don't be cross, Hannah!" said the eldest timidly. "We've only come in for a sup of milk."

"The milk is all gone sour," she replied shortly. "Ye mun just content yersels wi' a drink of water fra the pump. Tak' it and be off with you!"

She gave the thin, inoffensive house-cat a hoist with her foot, and settled down to her peas again.

The pump in the garden had gone dry long since, and Hannah knew it. The water they used in the household—that all the households in Barmoor used—came from the well at the bottom of the village, which had luckily continued its functions in spite of the drought.

The children, as Hannah knew well enough, did not want anything to drink, they wanted nothing but the antidote of human conversation to the restlessness and uneasiness that they shared with Hannah and Saunders and what their father was apt to call "the lower animals." The house-dog was as restless as they and would neither play with them nor stay quiet in his kennel. The hen fluttered brusquely in the hen-house, and the feverish rushing of wings that went on there made it an unpleasant abiding place for the children. They sometimes amused themselves by going in to hunt for eggs, but they left them alone today, and wandered on to the open study window, where the Reverend Matthew Cooper, in hot, black clothes, was working at his sermon for next Sunday, putting his hand up to his head every now and again.

The two little boys were in awe of their father, and all they dared do was to stand and watch him, until the intermittent scrapings of their feet on the walk in front of the window roused him from his meditations. He looked up; his brow furrowed.

"Well, my laddies, what do you want?" He spoke kindly enough, but his voice dragged with fatigue and oppression.

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"Father," asked the eldest child, "Father, tell us why don't they send rain when you pray for it?"

"You had better go and ask your mother," said the Vicar, with the sort of grim humour in which he usually dealt. He was by nature a hard, cold, God-fearing, pains-taking, undeveloped man, conscious of having a wife who managed him. "What about your lessons? Willie, I gave you a chapter to write out. Go and do some work if you can't play."

"But we've got a headache, Father."

"So have I—splitting. Run away now, and let me go on with my sermon. I haven't even chosen my text yet. . . . *'Who doeth great things and unsearchable. . . . Behold, He withholdeth the waters and they dry up. . . . He bindeth the waters in His thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them. . . . He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. . . . If the scourge slay suddenly, He will laugh at the trial of the innocent!'* "

The children left him in dull desperation and, going down to the bottom of the garden, took off their socks and sat with their feet in the place where the brook used to run. The dog would not come with them, but snapped and growled at John when he tried to make it. Hannah, who came to fetch them to early dinner, could not find them, thought they were only under the shade of the big rowanbush near the brookhead. But she did not trouble to look very far; she herself could not have told you whaten ailed her. . . .

"I cannot find them, mistress," she said to their mother who sat, carving-knife in one hand and fork in the other, before the family joint which Hannah had set down, faintly steaming, on the table before she went "after the children."

"Oh, very well! If they don't choose to come in to their meals. . . ."

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Mrs. Cooper helped her husband to a plateful and sent it in to him to his study, which he had intimated he was too busy to leave. She ate a small portion of meat herself—not much—it was too hot to be hungry. She was a hard woman and the absence of her two little sons did not affect her appetite in the least.

The kind-hearted maid gave them what she called “a bite and a sup” later on, when they came sheepishly home and put their heads round the door cheek. She did not scold them. The youngest boy looked very pale and white and avoided her eyes.

“Poor bairn!” she said, “he wants setting up with the sea air.”

The two children, after they had eaten, lay down and slept on a piece of sacking, very clean and dry, near the woodstack. Their little bedroom was over the kitchen and easy of access, but very dreary in the daytime because of the huge tree that overshadowed it. Hannah did not think of sending them up there, but flung another sack over their bare legs as they lay, and did not disturb them.

As the afternoon wore on to evening the hush became terribly oppressive. Not a breath, not a sound of birds twittering, of fowls fluttering. Only the far away moo of a discontented cow in an outhouse somewhere in the hills sounded like a faint trumpet call, and emphasised the stillness. The sky seemed more marble-misted than ever now, oppressively near, and all-encompassing.

As Hannah crossed the yard just before supper to throw a pailful of scrapings into the pig-trough, she heard a noise. It was not Hodgson’s cow? It might have been the grinding of one of Miller Farsyde’s flour wagons on the quartz that sprinkled the road up there beyond the brow—half-a-mile away? She did not know what it was—just a very faint rumble. . . . She thought

no more of it but, as she crossed the courtyard on her way back, something dropped on to the back of her hand which she could have sworn was a rain-drop. . . .

The thought passed. Her country mind again was a blank. She gave the boys a shake as she passed in.

"Come now, wake up! 'Tis supper time!"

The youngest boy stirred and frowned.

"Is it come?" he said—"the hole in the wall?"

"Whatten hole? Whatten wall? Whattiver rubbish is the child talking about?" she said carelessly, brushing the loose straws off his jacket with strong sideway pats and leading him into the dining-room where supper was spread. Willie, the elder and more prosaic of the two, manifested some interest in the items of the meal. It was beans and bacon and porridge, too solid fare for such a day as this had been. The Vicar had finished his sermon and was sitting in his place as pale as his white tie, but patient enough. The eldest child went round to his own high chair in silence, but the youngest crossed the room to his mother's side and pulled her by the sleeve. . . .

"What ails ye, laddie?" she asked, not unkindly.

"Will you give me a kiss?" he asked in a low voice lest his brother should hear and taunt him for being a "mammy-pet."

"What nonsense!" Mrs. Cooper said, with the helpless shyness of a hard woman. She stooped down and kissed her little son, nevertheless. "Now sit down and eat your supper quietly. Well, Mr. Cooper, how have ye got on with your sermon?"

"Badly!" replied her husband. "I seem to have such a weight on my brain—an oppression! It is quite dreadful. It is so bad, it really can't last—something must happen. Eat your supper, John, and don't stare."

For the youngest child's eyes were constantly fixed on his father and little silly questions that a father must an-



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swer seemed to be trembling on his lips. He said nothing until supper was over when speaking for both, he begged his mother to read to them.

She got the big family Bible and reverently flitted the pages. . . .

"Read about the Israelites and the Plagues of Egypt," suggested Willie.

"Very well," the mother said equably: her day's work was done, she had time now and was willing to please the children in their own way. She began;—

*"And Moses stretched forth his rod towards the heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail—"*

"Ay, I wish He would," murmured the Vicar.

*"And the fire ran along the ground, and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. . . ."*

She was going on in her monotonous, uneducated voice, when the youngest child suddenly screamed and hid his face on the arm of the sofa.

"Whisht, whisht!" she called out, by way of soothing him. "Why, you silly body, haven't ye heard it all before?"

The child continued to sob.

His face remained hidden. Sternly his parent ignored his hysterical outburst.

"How old were the children of Israel?" asked Willie, by way of distracting the attention of the elders from this bad conduct on his brother's part which would assuredly end in both being sent off to bed. Crying was never allowed. "Were they as old as me or only as old as John?"

Mrs. Cooper gave her mind to the destruction of the erroneous impression under which her children had been labouring and when it was done she raised her voice and called, "Hannah!" to the maid, who was to be heard moving heavily about in the passage. . . .

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John raised his face from the sofa, a wild fear in his eyes. Willie clasped his hands together, and together they pleaded with an unaccountable vehemence. . . .

"Oh, no, no, Mother; please, Mother—we don't want to go to bed. We can't! We can't!" both wailed.

"And what for no?" asked the mother, raising her strongly marked black eyebrows. "Why not to bed to-night, same as other nights?"

"Because—because—oh, Mother . . . Because we want another story. We want Abraham and Isaac," pleaded William. It was only an excuse and the mother knew it.

"One story is quite enough for one evening," she answered, severely; and John did not behave particularly well over that. "I won't hear any fond nonsense. Now you just trot along both of you! You are both as cross and sleepy as you can be. Bed's the safest place for you!"

Her rough, ordinary soothing was of no account to-night. The children's faces, as Hannah came in, were streaked with tears that dirtied them. John ran up to the kindly servant-maid and hid his face in the folds of her linsey gown.

"I want to speak to you," he sobbed.

"Noo, what then, ma honey?" said Hannah good-humouredly, stooping till her smooth head touched his touzled one.

"Well!"—she raised her head—"did ye ever hear the like? What sets ye asking that? Mistress, he wants to know if they mayn't creep in aside of father and mother to-night?"

"Please let us, Mother," they murmured, almost inaudibly.

"I never heard anything so fond!" exclaimed Mrs.

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Cooper, laughing grimly. "Be off with ye both quietly now, and let me hear no more nonsense."

"We did once, Mother."

"Once! Yes! When they were mending the roof of your bedroom; but the roof's safe and sound enough over your heads now. Why," she added laughing, "why, when I give ye a nice big bed to yourselves, should I go and cram my own and the master's with two tiresome children to kick me black and blue before morning? What are ye feared of, I say?"

But they would own to nothing and averted their eyes. A little under swell of sobbing, whimpering breaths testified to their distress.

"What's come to the bairns, I wonder?" She was puzzled, through her thick mental hide some sympathy pierced. "They're as fractious! Eh, it's this unked weather sets us all out of our wits."

"It *must* break," said her husband, "there's no sense in it. We may have rain to-morrow. I forgot to look at the glass as I passed in to-night. There may be a change soon, nay, there must be. . . . Come here, children, and say your prayers and let's have no more crying."

They realized the hopelessness of it and came meekly to his knee. Hannah folded her hands and looked on approvingly at the two flaxen heads as in their innocent, pretty, piping voices, they begged blessings on their hardened elders and murmured deep contrition for the sins they had not yet committed. They would up as usual with the prayer;—

"*'Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of Thine only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.'*"

Sadly they rose and kissed the guardians of their little

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lives who cruelly and carelessly crossed them in their strong, instinctive desire, and murmured formal good-nights. Then Hannah, taking a little, submissive hand of each, led them out of the room.

They went past the weather-glass in the hall, whose strongly marked signs and signals of change they were too young, and Hannah too ignorant, to understand, and walked round by half roofless passages to the kitchen. Then Hannah, laughingly propelling "mischief in front of her," pushed them up the shaky, wooden staircase that led into the large room where they always slept, brooded over by the enormous, over-arching elm tree. Its branches, that furiously tapped the little skylight pane when it was windy, hung still, like a drooping banner in a calm.

"I do believe it's that ugly girt tree they're feared of!" Hannah thought to herself.

During the passage towards their sleeping place they said nothing, but the fingers of the younger child closed and unclosed round the maid's stout thumb and his fair baby flesh struck her as very cold and old. . . .

"I'd let you both creep in aside o' me," she said, "only I'm that fleyed o' the mistress! She'd find us out, as sure as my name is Hannah Cawthorne."

She set down the candle on the chest in the long, low, empty loft-room. The chest and the bed were almost the only articles of furniture in it. The wooden rafters that supported the roof made fanciful bars and arches over the white dimity quilt. The bed was large, clean and comfortless.

When the two children had undressed and lain down, Hannah Cawthorne, of a gloomy North Country turn of mind that ran continually on omens and predestinations, could not help thinking how like two corpses laid out they looked, lying so straight, their little bodies outlined under

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the quilt, their eyes wide open and staring at the roof. It made her uncomfortable.

"There's nought to be afear'd on," she thought, trying to bring comfort to herself merely, for the children were still, submissive and past all repining now. "It's as safe as a church, but all the same. . . . Now shut your eyes," she said aloud, "there's good lads, and say 'Gentle Jesus' till ye feel the sleep coming on ye. Oh, ye'll sleep fine, trust me. Shall I leave ye the light?"

This was a wild stretch of authority. She might have lost her place over it. She was relieved when they shook their heads and declined it.

"See here," she went on, producing an apple from her pocket. "See here, ye can munch this atween ye."

She laid it down on the coverlet, but no little hand came forth to take it.

"Poor bairns, they're sad-like. . . . Eh, she's a hard woman, is the mistress! If they were mine, shouldn't I like them to nestle in aside o' me! This room is fair lonesome. Nobody could hear them if they were to skrike out. . . ."

"What are ye looking at, my honey?" she asked John curiously, for the child's eyes remained obstinately fixed on the roof, as if he saw something there.

"He's looking at the hole in the wall," volunteered the eldest boy at last. "He's shiverin'."

"Hap him up in your arms, ma bairnie, that'll soon warm him. . . . Now, children, I must be going. Good-night to ye both. . . ."

Hesitating, reluctant, she took up her candle and made a start for the door. . . .

"I don't half like leaving them," she murmured as, casting a last look at the two children, lying clasped according to her recommendation, in each other's arms, she stole out. Their faces were hidden in each other's necks,



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their sad, blue, apprehensive eyes were closed, obediently summoning sleep.

Gently sneaking the door, she blundered down the rickety staircase and made her way back to the other, safer part of the house. Uninstructed, she passed by the mysterious oracle hanging in the hall, unable to read or understand the plain meaning which its hands now bore.

"Eh, but she's a right hard woman is the mistress, and master follows her in all things. *He'd* have let the poor children come in aside him, when they begged and prayed fit to turn a heart to stone. . . ."

She did not toss on her hard pallet but lay stupefied in the heavy slumber that was the meed of her arduous existence. Upstairs, in the best bedroom, the Reverend Matthew Cooper slept off his headache. His wife did not drowse, but lay by her husband's side, straight and still as she had lain down, congratulating herself on the great healing storm that was even now breaking over the Vicarage, gloating over its promise of recomfiture and peace. . . . It rained, thundered and lightened for two hours.

When morning dawned the great drought was over and the air was refreshed.

Hannah, the maid, rose and went about her duties with a light heart and presently, having started the kitchen fire, called the parson and his wife to resume theirs.

When it was time, she pulled her dirty kitchen apron aside, put the kettle where it could not for the moment boil over, and went to call the parson's children.

She went up the crooked stair and opened the door gently, "not to waken them sudden-like." The first thing she saw, before she screamed, was the wide, jagged hole in the rafters above the bed where they still lay in each other's arms. The lightning that, guided by the tree

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which hung over the roof, passed through to the innocent children and dealt them their undeserved death, had not divided them. They were unchanged in appearance except for some little blue marks, like shot, deepset in the forehead of the one and the breast of the other.

# IRISH TALES

## I. THE FETCHES

*By John and Michael Banim*

**I** WRITE to acquaint you, my dear Barnes, of some curious and unusual circumstances.

I was sauntering by a lonely stream under a vertical July sun, down a valley which bore no traces of cultivation. Not a single cabin met my eye, no moving thing and, if a sound arose, it was the whisper of the water, the distant herd boy's whistle or the caw of a rook.

Amid this loneliness an old woman, roughly dressed, appeared, I know not how, up the valley before me. I happened to be looking at the water and when I raised my glance, she was there.

She was short, thin and brown, with lank white hair which fell thickly on each side of her face. Her red cloak reached her knees and under it she wore a green petticoat, but her head and feet were bare. She was about twenty yards from me and her small grey eyes were vacantly fixed on mine.

I paused, uneasy in spite of myself, then saluting the stranger, I walked towards her. She was standing on a slab of rock in the bed of the shrunken stream. In order to approach her I had to step from stone to stone and often go around some bigger boulder. One of the latter was so large that, for a moment, my view of the old woman was cut off. I hastily turned the corner, looked again for her in the place she had stood—but she was

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gone. I looked about, seeking the path she had taken, but could not see her.

Feeling uncomfortably disturbed I gazed about the valley and my eye was again challenged by her scarlet mantle, showing up in the sunlight. But now she was at a distance of nearly a quarter of a mile from where she had first appeared. Again I noticed that she was looking towards me. Anxious to discover the meaning of these appearances and disappearances, and perhaps feeling a little nervous, I hurried towards her up the stony bed of the stream.

The same thing happened again. Some obstacle obscured her for a moment and when I rounded it she had disappeared. I walked on to the spot where I had seen her and then perceived her standing on the edge of the distant mountain. Though dwindled by distance, she was yet boldly relieved against the back-ground of white clouds and she was still manifested to me by her bright, red mantle. A moment, and she had disappeared, going over the side of the mountain.

I found this very intriguing and followed determinedly. By my watch, to which I had the presence of mind to refer, it took me a quarter of an hour to reach the spot where she had stood; but she, an aged woman, feeble and worn had traversed the same space in much less time. On the ridge of the hill I looked abroad over widely-spreading fields, but she was nowhere to be seen.

Cottages were abundant and people were at work. I naturally concluded that they must have seen her. On making enquiries, however, I found that not only had they not, but that they held it to be impossible that she could have crossed, where I asserted she did, without their having noticed her.

As shortly after rain began to fall, I took refuge in one of the cabins. Its inhabitants gave me an Irish "*Cead*

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*Mille Phalteagh*"—a hundred thousand welcomes—and I soon sat in comfort before a turf fire,—with before me a meal of eggs, butter and oaten bread.

The family consisted of a middle-aged couple, a son and daughter nearly full-grown and a pale girl of about twenty, the old man's niece. From my continued enquiries concerning the old woman I had seen in the glen, the conversation turned on superstitions generally. With respect to the person I had seen the first opinion was "The Lord only knows what she was" but a neighbour coming in and reporting the sudden illness of old Grace Morrissy who inhabited a lone sheeling on the hill, my story recurred to them. They came to the conclusion then, that I had seen her "Fetch," and that meant they believed that she would die before morning.

The Fetch was not entirely new to me but I had never seen one before and I was sufficiently interested to question them closely.

It appears that in Ireland the Fetch is the supernatural simile of an individual. If it appears to its original that means that they will live long and happily. If it appears to others, that means the immediate death of the person it represents.

During the course of the tales to which my questions gave rise I noticed that the pale silent niece was listening with a deep assenting interest. Once, when she sighed, my host said, "No blame to you, Maggy Mauvourneen, for it's you that lives to know it well, God help you, this blessed night."

My curiosity being aroused I learned that she had seen the Fetch of her father.

He had, for some days, been ill of a fever. One evening, having occasion to call on an acquaintance at a little distance, she took a short cut across the fields. On arriving at the stile that led from the first into the second



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meadow, she chanced to look back and saw that her father was following her. The girl naturally thought he had become delirious and run out. She was about to hurry to him when the vision shook its head and hand at her with a commanding gesture. Perceiving it wished her to go on she tremblingly obeyed. On reaching the second stile she ventured to look back. The figure was standing by the first stile. It repeated the gesture. This so alarmed her that rushing on to the cottage to which she was going she told what she had seen and accompanied by a band of friends returned home another way.

When they arrived her father was dead and as her mother had been with him all the time of the girl's absence, there could be no question of his having left his bed.

The man who had brought the news of Grace Morrissey's illness also had a story to tell. One evening he had had to leave his home on a matter of business which took him across the mountain. When he was many miles from home his child suddenly appeared before him on the road. He knew it was her Fetch and hurried back to find that she had been taken ill. She died after a short illness.

I cannot doubt that these people had seen what also had appeared to me—the vision of a person marked for death.

### II. GRACE CONNOR

*By Letitia MacIntock*

Thady and Grace Connor lived on the borders of a large turf bog, in the parish of Clondevaddock, where they could hear the Atlantic surges thunder in upon the shore, and see the wild storms of winter sweep over the Muckish mountain, and his rugged neighbours.

Thady Connor worked in the fields, and Grace made a

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livelihood as a pedlar, carrying a basket of remnants of cloth, calico, drugget, and frieze about the country. The people rarely visited any large town, and found it convenient to buy from Grace, who was welcomed in many a lonely house, where a table was hastily cleared, that she might display her wares, being considered a very honest woman, she was frequently entrusted with commissions to the shops in Letterkenny and Ramelton. As she set out towards home, her basket was generally laden with little gifts for her children.

"Grace, dear," would one of the kind housewives say, "here's a farrel\* of oaten cake, wi' a taste o' butter on it; tak' it wi' you for the weans;" or, "Here's half-a-dozen of eggs; you've a big family to support."

Small Connors of all ages crowded round the weary mother, to rifle her basket of these gifts. But her thrifty, hard life came suddenly to an end. She died after an illness of a few hours, and was waked and buried as handsomely as Thady could afford.

Thady was in bed the night after the funeral, and the fire still burned brightly, when he saw his departed wife cross the room and bend over the cradle. Terrified, he muttered rapid prayers, covering his face with the blanket; and on looking up again the appearance was gone.

Next night he lifted the infant out of the cradle, and laid it behind him in the bed, hoping thus to escape his ghostly visitor; but Grace was presently in the room, and stretching over him to wrap up her child. Shinking and shuddering, the poor man exclaimed, "Grace, woman, what is it brings you back? What is it you want wi' me?"

"I want nothing from you, Thady, but to put thon wean back in her cradle," replied the spectre, in a tone of scorn.

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\* NOTE: When a large, round, flat griddle cake is divided into triangular cuts, each of these cuts is called a farrel.

## IRISH TALES

"You're too feared of me, but my sister Rose willna be feared for me—tell her to meet me tomorrow evening, in the old wallsteads."

Rose lived with her mother, about a mile off, but she obeyed her sister's summons without the least fear, and kept the strange tryst in due time.

"Rose, dear," said she, as she appeared before her sister in the old wallsteads, "my mind's oneasy about them two red shawls that's in the basket. Matty Hunter and Jane Taggart paid me for them, and I bought them wi' their money, Friday was eight days. Give them the shawls tomorrow. And old Mosey McCorkell gave me the price of a wiley coat; it's in under the other things in the basket. And now farewell; I can get to my rest."

"Grace, Grace, bide a wee minute," cried the faithful sister, as the dear voice grew fainter and the dear face began to fade—"Grace, darling. Thady? The children? One word more!" But neither cries nor tears could further detain the spirit.

# THE APPARITION OF MRS. VEAL

By DANIEL DEFOE

THIS thing is so rare in all its circumstances, and on so good authority that my reading and conversation has not given me anything like it. Mrs. Bargrave is the person to whom Mrs. Veal appeared after her death; she is my intimate friend, and I can avouch for her reputation for these last fifteen or sixteen years on my own knowledge. Though, since this relation, she is calumniated by friends of Mrs. Veal's brother, who thinks the relation of this appearance a reflection, and do therefore what they can to blast Mrs. Bargrave's reputation and laugh the story out of countenance.

You must know that Mrs. Veal was a maiden gentlewoman of about thirty, and for years had been troubled with fits. She was maintained by an only brother, and kept his house at Dover. She was intimately acquainted with Mrs. Bargrave from her childhood. Mrs. Veal's circumstances were then mean; her father did not take care of his children and they were exposed to hardships. And Mrs. Bargrave had in those days as unkind a father, though she wanted for neither food nor clothing; whilst Mrs. Veal wanted for both. So that it was in the power of Mrs. Bargrave to be very much her friend in several instances, which mightily endeared Mrs. Veal, so that she would often say, "Mrs. Bargrave, you are not only the best but the only friend I have in the world; and no circumstances of life shall ever dissolve my friendship."

They would often condole each other's adverse fortune,

## THE APPARITION OF MRS. VEAL

and read together "Drelincourt upon Death," and other good books. Some time after Mr. Veal's friends got him a place in the custom-house at Dover, which occasioned Mrs. Veal, little by little, to fall off from her intimacy with Mrs. Bargrave, though there was never any such thing as a quarrel; but an indifference came on by degrees, till at last Mrs. Bargrave, then living in Canterbury, had not seen her for two years and a half.

On the eighth of September last (1705) Mrs. Bargrave was sitting alone thinking over her unfortunate life and sewing, when she heard a knock at the door. She went to see who was there and it proved to be her old friend Mrs. Veal, who was in a riding-habit. At that moment the clock struck twelve at noon.

"I am surprised to see you," said Mrs. Bargrave, "for you have been so long a stranger;" she added that she was glad to see her and offered to give her a kiss. Mrs. Veal bent forward until their lips almost touched, then, drawing her hand across her eyes, she said, "I am not very well," and so waived it. She told Mrs. Bargrave then that she was going on a journey, but had wanted to see her first.

"But," says Mrs. Bargrave, "how come you to take a journey alone? I am amazed at it, because I know you have so fond a brother."

"Oh, I gave my brother the slip, and came away, because I had so great a mind to see you before I took my journey."

Mrs. Bargrave led the way into another room, that was within the first, and Mrs. Veal sat herself down in an elbow chair.

"My dear friend," says Mrs. Veal, "I am come to renew our old friendship and to beg your pardon for my breach of it."



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"Oh, don't mention it. I have not had any uneasy thought about it. I can easily forgive it."

"What did you think of me?" says Mrs. Veal.

Says Mrs. Bargrave, "I thought you were like the rest of the world and that prosperity had made you forget me."

Mrs. Veal, however, reminded Mrs. Bargrave of old kindnesses she had done her in former days, and of their times together when they had read "Drelincourt on Death." "Mrs. Bargrave," says she, "don't you think I am mightily impaired by my fits?"

"No," says Mrs. Bargrave; "I think you look as well as ever I knew you."

This talk between them lasted an hour or more and then Mrs. Veal asked her friend if she would write a letter for her, a letter to her brother. She was to tell him that she wanted her rings given to such and such; and that there was a purse of gold in her cabinet, and that she would have two broad pieces from it given to her cousin Watson.

As she was talking quickly and passing her hand frequently across her brow, Mrs. Bargrave fancied a fit was coming upon her. She therefore placed herself in a chair just before her knees, to keep her from falling to the ground, if her fits should occasion it. And to divert Mrs. Veal's attention, she took hold of her gown-sleeve and commended it. Mrs. Veal told her it was a scoured silk and newly made up; but she was not to be turned from her request that Mrs. Bargrave would write to her brother.

"But," said the latter, "surely it would be better for you to do it yourself."

"No; though it seems impertinent to you now, you will see more reason for it hereafter."

Then Mrs. Veal asked for Mrs. Bargrave's daughter.

## THE APPARITION OF MRS. VEAL

She said she was not at home. "But if you have a mind to see her, I'll send for her."

"Do," says Mrs. Veal.

On which she left her, and went to a neighbour's to send for her; and by the time Mrs. Bargrave was returning, Mrs. Veal was got without the door in the street, and stood ready to part as soon as Mrs. Bargrave came to her. She asked why she was in such haste and Mrs. Veal said she must be going, though perhaps she might not go her journey till Monday; and told Mrs. Bargrave she hoped she should see her again at her cousin Watson's before she went whither she was agoing. Then she said she would not take her leave of her, and walked from Mrs. Bargrave, in her view, till a turning interrupted the sight of her, which was three quarters after one in the afternoon of the eighth of September.

Mrs. Veal had died the seventh of September, at twelve o'clock at noon, of her fits. The day after her appearance, being Sunday. Mrs. Bargrave was mightily indisposed with a cold and a sore throat; but on Monday morning she sent a person to Captain Watson's to know if Mrs. Veal were there. They wondered at Mrs. Bargrave's enquiry and sent her word she was not there. At this answer, though Mrs. Bargrave was ill, she put on her hood and went herself to Captain Watson's to see if Mrs. Veal were there or not. They said they wondered at her asking, for they were sure that if she had been in town she would have been there. Says Mrs. Bargrave, "She was with me on Saturday almost two hours."

They said it was impossible and, while they were disputing, in comes Captain Watson with the sad news that Mrs. Veal was dead and that her escutcheons were being made.

Strangely surprised Mrs. Bargrave went to the person who had the care of them and found it was true.

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Returning she related the whole story to the Watson family. "She had on a striped gown and told me it was scoured."

"You have seen her indeed," cried Mrs. Watson, "for none knew but Mrs. Veal and myself that the gown was scoured. And you have described the gown exactly for I helped her make it up."

Mrs. Watson blazed this about the town, avouching that Mrs. Bargrave had truly seen the apparition of Mrs. Veal.

I should have said before that Mrs. Veal told Mrs. Bargrave that her sister and brother-in-law were just come down from London to see her.

"How came you," Mrs. Bargrave had enquired, "to order matters so strangely?"

"It could not be helped," Mrs. Veal had replied.

And her brother and sister did come to see her and entered the town of Dover as Mrs. Veal was expiring.

All the time I sat with Mrs. Bargrave, which was some hours, she recollected fresh sayings of Mrs. Veal. And one material thing more she told Mrs. Bargrave, which was that old Mr. Breton allowed Mrs. Veal ten pounds a year, which was a secret, and unknown to Mrs. Bargrave until Mrs. Veal told her.

Mrs. Bargrave never varies in her story, which puzzles those who doubt of the truth or are unwilling to believe it. But Mr. Veal does what he can to stifle the story, and some of his friends report her to be a great liar, and that she knew of Mr. Breton's ten pounds a year. But the person who pretends these things has the reputation of a notorious liar among persons whom I know to be of undoubted repute.

Why Mr. Veal should think this relation a reflection—as it is plain he does by his endeavour to stifle it—I cannot imagine; for her errand was to ask Mrs. Bargrave's

## THE APPARITION OF MRS. VEAL

forgiveness for her breach of friendship and with a pious discourse to encourage her.

To suppose that Mrs. Bargrave could hatch such an invention as this, she must be more fortunate, witty and wicked, too, than any indifferent person will allow.

"I would not," says she, "give a farthing to make any one believe my story; and, had it not come to light by accident, it would never have been made public."

The thing has very much affected me, and I am as well satisfied as I am of the best grounded matters of fact. And why we should dispute matters of fact, because we cannot solve things of which we can have no certain or demonstrative notions, seems strange to me; Mrs. Bargrave's authority and sincerity alone would have been undoubted in any other case.

# THE STRANGER

By AMBROSE BIERCE

A MAN stepped out of the darkness into the little illuminated circle about our failing campfire and seated himself upon a rock.

"You are not the first to explore this region," he said, gravely.

Nobody controverted his statement; he was himself proof of its truth, for he was not of our party and must have been somewhere near when we camped. Moreover, he must have companions not far away; it was not a place where one would be living or traveling alone. For more than a week we had seen, besides ourselves and our animals, only such living things as rattlesnakes and horned toads. In an Arizona desert one does not long coexist with only such creatures as these: one must have pack animals, supplies, arms—"an outfit." And all these imply comrades. It was perhaps a doubt as to what manner of men this unceremonious stranger's comrades might be, together with something in his words interpretable as a challenge, that caused every man of our half-dozen "gentlemen adventurers" to rise to a sitting posture and lay his hand upon a weapon—an act signifying, in that time and place, a policy of expectation. The stranger gave the matter no attention and began again to speak in the same deliberate, uninflected monotone in which he had delivered his first sentence:

"Thirty years ago Ramon Gallegos, William Shaw,

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From *Can Such Things Be*, by Ambrose Bierce, copyright, 1909, by Albert and Charles Boni.



## THE STRANGER

George W. Kent and Berry Davis, all of Tucson, crossed the Santa Catalina mountains and travelled due west, as nearly as the configuration of the country permitted. We were prospecting and it was our intention, if we found nothing, to push through to the Gila river at some point near Big Bend, where we understood there was a settlement. We had a good outfit but no guide—just Ramon Gallegos, William Shaw, George W. Kent and Berry Davis.”

The man repeated the names slowly and distinctly, as if to fix them in the memories of his audience, every member of which was now attentively observing him, but with a slackened apprehension regarding his possible companions somewhere in the darkness which seemed to enclose us like a black wall; for in the manner of this volunteer historian was no suggestion of an unfriendly purpose. His act was rather that of a harmless lunatic than an enemy. We were not so new to the country as not to know that the solitary life of many a plainsman had a tendency to develop eccentricities of conduct and character not always easily distinguishable from mental aberration. A man is like a tree: in a forest of his fellows he will grow as straight as his generic and individual nature permits; alone in the open he yields to the deforming stresses and tortions that environ him. Some such thoughts were in my mind as I watched the man from the shadow of my hat, pulled low to shut out the firelight. A witless fellow, no doubt, but what could he be doing there in the heart of a desert?

Nobody having broken silence the visitor went on to say:

“This country was not then what it is now. There was not a ranch between the Gila and the Gulf. There was a little game here and there in the mountains, and near the infrequent water-holes grass enough to keep our animals from starvation. If we should be so fortunate as to

encounter no Indians we might get through. But within a week the purpose of the expedition had altered from discovery of wealth to preservation of life. We had gone too far to go back, for what was ahead could be no worse than what was behind; so we pushed on, riding by night to avoid Indians and the intolerable heat, and concealing ourselves by day as best we could. Sometimes, having exhausted our supply of wild meat and emptied our casks, we were days without food and drink; then a water-hole or a shallow pool in the bottom of an arroyo so restored our strength and sanity that we were able to shoot some of the wild animals that sought it also. Sometimes it was a bear, sometimes an antelope, a coyote, a cougar—that was as God pleased; all were food.

“One morning as we skirted a mountain range, seeking a practicable pass, we were attacked by a band of Apaches who had followed our trail up a gulch—it is not far from here. Knowing that they outnumbered us ten to one, they took none of their usual cowardly precautions, but dashed upon us at a gallop, firing and yelling. Fighting was out of the question: we urged our feeble animals up the gulch as far as there was footing for a hoof, then threw ourselves out of our saddles and took to the chaparral on one of the slopes, abandoning our entire outfit to the enemy. But we retained our rifles, every man—Ramon Gallegos, William Shaw, George W. Kent and Berry Davis.”

“Same old crowd,” said the humorist of the party. A gesture of disapproval from our leader silenced him and the stranger proceeded with his tale:

“The savages dismounted also, and some of them ran up the gulch beyond the point at which we had left it, cutting off further retreat in that direction and forcing us on up the side. Unfortunately the chaparral extended only a short distance up the slope, and as we came into the

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open ground above we took the fire of a dozen rifles; but Apaches shoot badly when in a hurry, and God so willed it that none of us fell. Twenty yards up the slope, beyond the edge of the brush, were vertical cliffs, in which, directly in front of us, was a narrow opening. Into that we ran, finding ourselves in a cavern about as large as an ordinary room. Here for a time we were safe: a single man with a repeating rifle could defend the entrance against all the Apaches in the land. But against hunger and thirst we had no defence. Courage we still had, but hope was a memory.

“Not one of those Indians did we afterward see, but by the smoke and glare of their fires in the gulch we knew that by day and by night they watched with ready rifles in the edge of the bush—knew that if we made a sortie not a man of us would live to take three steps into the open. For three days, watching in turn, we held out before our suffering became insupportable. Then—it was the morning of the fourth day—Ramon Gallegos said:

“‘Señores, I know not well of the good God and what please him. I have live without religion, and I am not acquaint with that of you. Pardon, señores, if I shock you, but for me the time is come to beat the game of the Apache.’

“He knelt upon the rock floor of the cave and pressed his pistol against his temple. ‘Madre de dios,’ he said, ‘comes now the soul of Ramon Gallegos.’

“And so he left us—William Shaw, George W. Kent and Berry Davis.

“I was the leader: it was for me to speak.

“‘He was a brave man,’ I said—‘he knew when to die, and how. It is foolish to go mad from thirst and fall by Apache bullets, or be skinned alive—it is bad taste. Let us join Ramon Gallegos.’

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" 'That is right,' said William Shaw.

" 'That is right,' said George W. Kent.

"I straightened the limbs of Ramon Gallegos and put a handkerchief over his face. Then William Shaw said: 'I should like to look like that a little while.'

"And George W. Kent said that he felt that way, too.

" 'It shall be so,' I said: 'the red devils will wait a week. William Shaw and George W. Kent, draw and kneel.'

"They did so and I stood before them.

" 'Almighty God, our Father,' said I.

" 'Almighty God, our Father,' said William Shaw.

" 'Almighty God, our Father,' said George W. Kent.

" 'Forgive us our sins,' said I.

" 'Forgive us our sins,' said they.

" 'And receive our souls.'

" 'And receive our souls.'

" 'Amen!'

" 'Amen!'

"I laid them beside Ramon Gallegos and covered their faces."

There was a quick commotion on the opposite side of the campfire: one of our party had sprung to his feet, pistol in hand.

" 'And you!'" he shouted—"you dared to escape?—you dare to be alive? You cowardly hound, I'll send you to join them if I hang for it!"

But with the leap of a panther the captain was upon him, grasping his wrist. "Hold it in, Sam Yountsey, hold it in!"

We were now all upon our feet—except the stranger, who sat motionless and apparently inattentive. Some one seized Yountsey's other arm.

"Captain," I said, "there is something wrong here. This fellow is either a lunatic or merely a liar—just a

## THE STRANGER

plain, everyday liar that Yountsey has no call to kill. If this man was of that party it had five members, one of whom—probably himself—he has not named.”

“Yes,” said the captain, releasing the insurgent, who sat down, “there is something unusual. Years ago four dead bodies of white men, scalped and shamefully mutilated, were found about the mouth of that cave. They are buried there; I have seen the graves—we shall all see them tomorrow.”

The stranger rose, standing tall in the light of the expiring fire, which in our breathless attention to his story we had neglected to keep going.

“‘There were four,’ he said— ‘Ramon Gallegos, William Shaw, George W. Kent and Berry Davis.’

With this reiterated roll-call of the dead he walked into the darkness and we saw him no more.

At that moment one of our party, who had been on guard, strode in among us, rifle in hand and somewhat excited.

“Captain,” he said, “for the last half-hour three men have been standing out there on the *mesa*.” He pointed in the direction taken by the stranger. “I could see them distinctly, for the moon is up, but as they had no guns and I had them covered with mine I thought it was their move. They have made none, but, damn it! they have got on my nerves.”

“Go back to your post, and stay till you see them again,” said the captain. “The rest of you lie down again, or I’ll kick you all into the fire.”

The sentinel obediently withdrew, swearing, and did not return. As we were arranging our blankets, the fiery Yountsey said: “I beg your pardon, Captain, but who the devil do you take them to be?”

“Ramon Gallegos, William Shaw and George W. Kent.”



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"But how about Berry Davis? I ought to have shot him."

"Quite needless; you couldn't have made him any deader. Go to sleep."

# THE GHOST-SHIP

By RICHARD MIDDLETON

**F**AIRFIELD is a little village lying near the Portsmouth Road about halfway between London and the sea. Strangers who find it by accident now and then, call it a pretty old-fashioned place; we who live in it and call it home don't find anything very pretty about it, but we should be sorry to live anywhere else. Our minds have taken the shape of the inn and the church and the green, I suppose. At all events we never feel comfortable out of Fairfield.

Of course the Cockneys, with their vasty houses and noise-ridden streets, can call us rustics if they choose, but for all that Fairfield is a better place to live in than London. Doctor says that when he goes to London his mind is bruised with the weight of the houses, and he was a Cockney born. He had to live there himself when he was a little chap, but he knows better now. You gentlemen may laugh—perhaps some of you come from London way—but it seems to me that a witness like that is worth a gallon of arguments.

Dull? Well, you might find it dull, but I assure you that I've listened to all the London yarns you have spun tonight, and they're absolutely nothing to the things that happen at Fairfield. It is because of our way of thinking and minding our own business. If one of your Londoners were set down on the green of a Saturday night when

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From *The Ghost-Ship and Other Stories*, by Richard Middleton. Published in America by Mitchell Kennerly and included in this volume with his permission.

the ghosts of the lads who died in the war keep tryst with the lassies who lie in the churchyard, he couldn't help being curious and interfering, and then the ghosts would go somewhere where it was quieter. But we just let them come and go and don't make any fuss, and in consequence Fairfield is the ghostiest place in all England. Why, I've seen a headless man sitting on the edge of the well in broad daylight, and the children playing about his feet as if he were their father. Take my word for it, spirits know when they are well off as much as human beings.

Still, I must admit that the thing I'm going to tell you about was queer even for our part of the world, where three packs of ghost-hounds hunt regularly during the season, and blacksmith's great-grandfather is busy all night shoeing the dead gentleman's horses. Now that's a thing that wouldn't happen in London, because of their interfering ways, but blacksmith he lies up aloft and sleeps as quiet as a lamb. Once when he had a bad head he shouted down to them not to make so much noise, and in the morning he found an old guinea left on the anvil as an apology. He wears it on his watch-chain now. But I must get on with my story; if I start telling you about the queer happenings at Fairfield I'll never stop.

It all came of the great storm in the spring of '97, the year that we had two great storms. This was the first one, and I remember it very well, because I found in the morning that it had lifted the thatch of my pigsty into the widow's garden as clean as a boy's kite. When I looked over the hedge, widow—Tom Lamport's widow that was—was prodding for her nasturtiums with a daisy-grubber. After I had watched her for a little I went down to the "Fox and Grapes" to tell landlord what she had said to me. Landlord he laughed, being a married man and

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at ease with the sex. "Come to that," he said, "the tempest has blowed something into my field. A kind of a ship I think it would be."

I was surprised at that until he explained that it was only a ghost-ship and would do no hurt to the turnips. We argued that it had been blown up from the sea at Portsmouth, and then we talked of something else. There were two slates down at the parsonage and a big tree in Lumley's meadow. It was a rare storm.

I reckon the wind had blown our ghosts all over England. They were coming back for days afterwards with foundered horses and as footsore as possible, and they were so glad to get back to Fairfield that some of them walked up the street crying like little children. Squire said that his great-grandfather's great-grandfather hadn't looked so dead-beat since the battle of Naseby, and he's an educated man.

What with one thing and another, I should think it was a week before we got straight again, and then one afternoon I met the landlord on the green and he had a worried face. "I wish you'd come and have a look at that ship in my field," he said to me; "it seems to me it's leaning real hard on the turnips. I can't bear thinking what the missus will say when she sees it."

I walked down the lane with him, and sure enough there was a ship in the middle of his field, but such a ship as no man had seen on the water for three hundred years, let alone in the middle of a turnip-field. It was all painted black and covered with carvings, and there was a great bay window in the stern for all the world like the Squire's drawing-room. There was a crowd of little black cannon on deck and looking out of her portholes, and she was anchored at each end of the hard ground. I have seen the wonders of the world on picture-postcards, but I have never seen anything to equal that.

"She seems very solid for a ghost-ship," I said, seeing the landlord was bothered.

"I should say it's betwixt and between," he answered, puzzling it over, "but it's going to spoil a matter of fifty turnips, and missus she'll want it moved." We went up to her and touched the side, and it was as hard as a real ship. "Now there's folks in England would call that very curious," he said.

I don't know much about ships, but I should think that that ghost-ship weighed a solid two hundred tons, and it seemed to me that she had come to stay, so that I felt sorry for landlord, who was a married man. "All the horses in Fairfield won't move her out of my turnips," he said, frowning at her.

Just then we heard a noise on her deck, and we looked up and saw a man had come out of her front cabin and was looking down at us very peaceably. He was dressed in a black uniform set out with rusty gold lace, and he had a great cutlass by his side in a brass sheath. "I'm Captain Bartholomew Roberts," he said, in a gentleman's voice, "put in for recruits. I seem to have brought her rather far up the harbour."

"Harbour!" cried landlord; "why, you're fifty miles from the sea."

Captain Roberts didn't turn a hair. "So much as that, is it?" he said coolly. "Well, it's of no consequence."

Landlord was a bit upset at this. "I don't want to be unneighbourly," he said, "but I wish you hadn't brought your ship into my field. You see, my wife sets great store on these turnips."

The Captain took a pinch of snuff out of a fine gold box that he pulled out of his pocket, and dusted his fingers with a silk handkerchief in a very genteel fashion. "I'm only here for a few months," he said; "but if a testimony



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of my esteem would pacify your good lady I should be content," and with the words he loosed a great gold brooch from the neck of his coat and tossed it down to landlord.

Landlord blushed as red as a strawberry. "I'm not denying she's fond of jewellery," he said, "but it's too much for half a sackful of turnips." And indeed it was a handsome brooch.

The Captain laughed. "Tut, man," he said, "it's a forced sale, and you deserve a good price. Say no more about it"; and nodding good-day to us, he turned on his heel and went into the cabin. Landlord walked back up the lane like a man with a weight off his mind. "That tempest has blowed me a bit of luck," he said; "the missus will be main pleased with that brooch. It's better than blacksmith's guinea, any day."

Ninety-seven was Jubilee year, the year of the second Jubilee, you remember, and we had great doings at Fairfield, so that we hadn't much time to bother about the ghost-ship, though anyhow it isn't our way to meddle in things that don't concern us. Landlord, he saw his tenant once or twice when he was hoeing his turnips and passed the time of day, and landlord's wife wore her new brooch to church every Sunday. But we didn't mix much with the ghosts at any time, all except an idiot lad there was in the village, and he didn't know the difference between a man and a ghost, poor innocent. On Jubilee Day, however, somebody told Captain Roberts why the church bells were ringing, and he hoisted a flag and fired off his guns, like a loyal Englishman. 'Tis true the guns were shotted, and one of the round shot knocked a hole in Farmer Johnstone's barn, but nobody thought much of that in such a season of rejoicing. It wasn't till our celebrations were over that we noticed that anything was wrong in Fair-

field. 'Twas the shoemaker who told me first about it one morning at the "Fox and Grapes."

"You know my great-great-uncle?" he said to me.

"You mean Joshua, the quiet lad," I answered, knowing him well.

"Quiet!" said shoemaker indignantly. "Quiet you call him, coming home at three o'clock every morning as drunk as a magistrate and waking up the whole house with his noise."

"Why, it can't be Joshua!" I said, for I knew him for one of the most respectable young ghosts in the village.

"Joshua it is," said the shoemaker; "and one of these nights he'll find himself out in the street if he isn't careful."

This kind of talk shocked me, I can tell you, for I don't like to hear a man abusing his own family, and I could hardly believe that a steady youngster like Joshua had taken to drink. But just then in came butcher Aylwin in such a temper that he could hardly drink his beer. "The young puppy! the young puppy!" he kept on saying; and it was some time before shoemaker and I found out that he was talking about his ancestor that fell at Senlac.

"Drink?" said shoemaker hopefully, for we all like company in our misfortunes, and butcher nodded grimly.

"The young noodle," he said, emptying his tankard.

Well, after that I kept my ears open, and it was the same story all over the village. There was hardly a young man among all the ghosts of Fairfield who didn't roll home in the small hours of the morning the worse for liquor. I used to wake up in the night and hear them stumble past my house, singing outrageous songs. The worst of it was that we couldn't keep the scandal to ourselves, and the folk of Greenhill began to talk of "sodden Fairfield" and taught their children to sing a song about us:

## THE GHOST-SHIP

*"Sodden Fairfield, sodden Fairfield, has no use for bread-  
and-butter,  
Rum for breakfast, rum for dinner, rum for tea, and  
rum for supper!"*

We are easy-going in our village, but we didn't like that.

Of course we soon found out where the young fellows went to get the drink, and landlord was terribly cut up that his tenant should have turned out so badly, but his wife wouldn't hear of parting with the brooch, so that he couldn't give the Captain notice to quit. But as time went on, things grew from bad to worse, and at all hours of the day you could see those young reprobates sleeping it off on the village green. Nearly every afternoon a ghost-wagon used to jolt down to the ship with a lading of rum, and though the older ghosts seemed inclined to give the Captain's hospitality the go-by, the youngsters were neither to hold nor to bind.

So one afternoon when I was taking my nap I heard a knock at the door, and there was parson looking very serious, like a man with a job before him that he didn't altogether relish. "I'm going down to talk to the Captain about all this drunkenness in the village, and I want you to come with me," he said straight out.

I can't say that I fancied the visit much myself, and I tried to hint to parson that as, after all, they were only a lot of ghosts, it didn't very much matter.

"Dead or alive, I'm responsible for their good conduct," he said, "and I'm doing to do my duty and put a stop to this continued disorder. And you are coming with me, John Simmons." So I went, parson being a persuasive kind of man.

We went down to the ship, and as we approached her, I could see the Captain tasting the air on deck. When he

saw parson he took off his hat very politely, and I can tell you that I was relieved to find that he had a proper respect for the cloth. Parson acknowledged his salute and spoke out stoutly enough. "Sir, I should be glad of a word with you."

"Come on board, sir; come on board," said the Captain, and I could tell by his voice that he knew why we were there. Parson and I climbed up an uneasy kind of ladder, and the Captain took us into the great cabin at the back of the ship, where the bay-window was. It was the most wonderful place you ever saw in your life, all full of gold and silver plate, swords with jewelled scabbards, carved oak chairs, and great chests that looked as though they were bursting with guineas. Even parson was surprised, and he did not shake his head very hard when the Captain took down some silver cups and poured us out a drink of rum. I tasted mine, and I don't mind saying that it changed my view of things entirely. There was nothing betwixt and between about that rum, and I felt that it was ridiculous to blame the lads for drinking too much of stuff like that. It seemed to fill my veins with honey and fire.

Parson put the case squarely to the Captain, but I didn't listen much to what he said; I was busy sipping my drink and looking through the window at the fishes swimming to and fro over landlord's turnips. Just then it seemed the most natural thing in the world that they should be there, though afterwards, of course, I could see that that proved it was a ghost-ship.

But even then I thought it was queer when I saw a drowned sailor float by in the thin air with his hair and beard all full of bubbles. It was the first time I had seen anything quite like that at Fairfield.

All the time I was regarding the wonders of the deep, parson was telling Captain Roberts how there was no peace

## THE GHOST-SHIP

or rest in the village owing to the curse of drunkenness, and what a bad example the youngsters were setting to the older ghosts. The Captain listened very attentively, and only put in a word now and then about boys being boys and young men sowing their wild oats. But when parson had finished his speech he filled up our silver cups and said to parson, with a flourish, "I should be sorry to cause trouble anywhere where I have been made welcome, and you will be glad to hear that I put to sea to-morrow night. And now you must drink me a prosperous voyage." So we all stood up and drank the toast with honour, and that noble rum was like hot oil in my veins.

After that the Captain showed us some of the curiosities he had brought back from foreign parts, and we were greatly amazed, though afterwards I couldn't clearly remember what they were. And then I found myself walking across the turnips with parson, and I was telling him of the glories of the deep that I had seen through the window of the ship. He turned on me severely. "If I were you, John Simmons," he said, "I should go straight home to bed."

He has a way of putting things that wouldn't occur to an ordinary man, has parson, and I did as he told me.

"Well, next day it came on to blow, and it blew harder and harder, till about eight o'clock at night I heard a noise and looked out into the garden. I dare say you won't believe me, it seems a bit tall even to me, but the wind had lifted the thatch of my pigsty into the widow's garden a second time. I thought I wouldn't wait to hear what widow had to say about it, so I went across the green to the "Fox and Grapes," and the wind was so strong that I danced along on tip-toe like a girl at the fair. When I got to the inn landlord had to help me shut the door; it seemed as though a dozen goats were pushing against it to come in out of the storm.



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"It's a powerful tempest," he said, drawing the beer. "I hear there's a chimney down at Dickory End."

"It's a funny thing how these sailors know about the weather," I answered. "When Captain said he was going to-night, I was thinking it would take a capful of wind to carry the ship back to sea, but now here's more than a capful."

"Ah, yes," said landlord, "it's to-night he goes true enough, and, mind you, though he treated me handsome over the rent, I'm not sure it's a loss to the village. I don't hold with gentrice who fetch their drink from London, instead of helping local traders to get their living."

"But you haven't got any rum like his," I said to draw him out.

His neck grew red above his collar, and I was afraid I'd gone too far; but after a while he got his breath with a grunt.

"John Simmons," he said, "if you've come down here this windy night to talk a lot of fool's talk, you've wasted a journey."

Well, of course, then I had to smooth him down with praising his rum, and Heaven forgive me for swearing it was better than the Captain's. For the like of that rum no living lips have tasted save mine and parson's. But somehow or other I brought landlord round, and presently we must have a glass of his best to prove its quality.

"Beat that if you can!" he cried, and we both raised our glasses to our mouths, only to stop half-way and look at each other in amaze. For the wind that had been howling outside like an outrageous dog had all of a sudden turned as melodious as the carol boys of a Christmas Eve.

"Surely that's not my Martha," whispered landlord; Martha being his great-aunt that lived in the loft overhead.

We went to the door, and the wind burst it open so that

## THE GHOST-SHIP

the handle was driven clean into the plaster of the wall. But we didn't think about that at the time; for over our heads, sailing very comfortable through the windy stars, was the ship that had passed the summer in landlord's field. Her port holes and her bay-window were blazing with lights, and there was a noise of singing and fiddling on her decks. "He's gone!" shouted landlord above the storm, "and he's taken half the village with him!" I could only nod in answer, not having lungs like bellows of leather.

In the morning we were able to measure the strength of the storm, and over and above my pigsty there was damage enough wrought in the village to keep us busy. True it is that the children had to break down no branches for the firing that autumn, since the wind had strewn the woods with more than they could carry away. Many of our ghosts were scattered abroad but this time very few came back, all the young men having sailed with Captain; and not only ghosts, but a poor half-witted lad was missing, and we reckoned that he had stowed himself away or perhaps shipped as cabin-boy, not knowing any better.

What with the lamentations of the ghost-girls and the grumbings of families who had lost an ancestor, the village was upset for a while, and the funny thing was that it was the folk who had complained most of the carryings-on of the youngsters, who made most noise now that they were gone. I hadn't any sympathy with shoemaker or butcher, who ran about saying how much they missed their lads, but it made me grieve to hear the poor bereaved girls calling their lovers by name on the village green at night-fall. It didn't seem fair to me that they should have lost their men a second time, after giving up life in order to join them, as like as not. Still, not even a spirit can be sorry for ever, and after a few months we made up our

minds that the folk who had sailed in the ship were never coming back, and we didn't talk about it any more.

And then one day, I daresay it would be a couple of years after, when the whole business was quite forgotten, who should come trapesing along the road from Portsmouth but the daft lad who had gone away with the ship without waiting till he was dead to become a ghost. You never saw such a boy as that in all your life. He had a great rusty cutlass hanging to a string at his waist, and he was tattooed all over in fine colors, so that even his face looked like a girl's sampler. He had a handkerchief in his hand full of foreign shells and old-fashioned pieces of small money, very curious, and he walked up to the well outside his mother's house and drew himself a drink as if he had been nowhere in particular.

The worst of it was that he had come back as soft-headed as he went, and, try as we might we couldn't get anything reasonable out of him. He talked a lot of gibberish about keel-hauling and walking the plank and crimson murders—things which a decent sailor should know nothing about so that it seemed to me that for all his manners Captain had been more of a pirate than a gentleman mariner. But to draw sense out of that boy was as hard as picking cherries off a crab-tree. One silly tale he had that he kept on drifting back to, and to hear him you would have thought that it was the only thing that had happened to him in his life. "We was at anchor," he would say, "off an island called the Basket of Flowers, and the sailors had caught a lot of parrots and we were teaching them to swear. Up and down the decks, up and down the decks, and the language they used was dreadful. Then we looked up and saw the masts of the Spanish ship outside the harbour. Outside the harbour they were, so we threw the parrots into the sea and sailed out to fight. And all the parrots were drowned in the sea and the language

## THE GHOST-SHIP

they used was dreadful." That's the sort of boy he was, nothing but silly talk of parrots when we asked him about the fighting. And we never had a chance of teaching him better, for two days after he ran away again, and hasn't been seen since.

That's my story, and I assure you that things like that are happening at Fairfield all the time. The ship has never come back, but somehow as people grow older they seem to think that one of these windy nights she'll come sailing in over the hedges with all the lost ghosts on board. Well, when she comes, she'll be welcome. There's one ghost-lass that has never grown tired of waiting for her lad to return. Every night you'll see her out on the green, straining her poor eyes with looking for the mast-lights among the stars. A faithful lass you'd call her, and I'm thinking you'd be right.

Landlord's field wasn't a penny the worse for the visit, but they do say that since then the turnips that have been grown in it have tasted of rum.

# ROOUM

By OLIVER ONIONS

**F**OR all I ever knew to the contrary, it was his own name; and something about him, name or man or both, always put me in mind, I can't tell you how, of negroes. As regards the name, I dare say it was something huggermugger in the mere sound—something that I classed, for no particular reason, with dark ignorant words, such as "Obi" and "Hoodoo." I only know that after I learned his name was Rooum, I couldn't have thought of him as being called anything else.

The first impression that you got of his head was that it was a patchwork of black and white—black bushy hair and short white beard, or else the other way about. As a matter of fact, both hair and beard were pie-bald, so that if you saw him in the gloom a dim patch of white showed down one side of his head, and dark tufts cropped up here and there in his beard. His eyebrows alone were entirely black, with a little sprouting of hair almost joining them. And perhaps his skin helped to make me think of negroes, for it was very dark, of the dark brown that always seems to have more than a hint of green behind it. His forehead was low, and scored across with deep horizontal furrows.

We never knew when he was going to turn up on a job. We might not have seen him for weeks, but his face was always as likely as not to appear over the edge of a crane-platform just when that marvellous mechanical intuition of his was badly needed. He wasn't certificated. He wasn't even trained, as the rest of us understood training;



## ROOUM

and he scoffed at the drawing-office, and laughed outright at logarithms and our laborious methods of getting out quantities. But he could set sheers and tackle in a way that made the rest of us look silly. I remember once how, through the parting of a chain, a sixty-foot girder had come down and lay under a ruck of other stuff, as the bottom chip lies under a pile of spellikins—a helpless-looking smash. Myself, I'm certificated twice or three times over, but I can only assure you that I wanted to kick myself when, after I'd spent a day and a sleepless night over the job, I saw the game of tit-tat-toe that Rooum made of it in an hour or two. Certificated or not, a man isn't a fool who can do that sort of thing. And he was one of those fellows, too, who can "find water"—tell you where water is and what amount of getting it is likely to take, by just walking over the place. We aren't certificated up to that yet.

He was offered good money to stick to us—to stick to our firm—but he always shook his black-and-white head. He'd never be able to keep the bargain if he were to make it, he told us quite fairly. I know there are these chaps who can't endure to be clocked to their work with a patent time-clock in the morning and released of an evening with a whistle—and it's one of the things no master can understand. So Rooum came and went erratically, showing up maybe in Leeds or Liverpool, perhaps next on Plymouth breakwater, and once he turned up in an out-of-the-way place in Glamorganshire just when I was wondering what had become of him.

The way I got to know him (got to know him, I mean, more than just to nod) was that he tacked himself on to me one night down Vauxhall way, where we were setting up some small plant or other. We had knocked off for the day, and I was walking in the direction of the bridge when he came up. We walked along together; and we had not

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gone far before it appeared that his reason for joining me was that he wanted to know what a molecule was.

I stared at him a bit.

"What do you want to know that for?" I said. "What does a chap like you, who can do it all backwards, want with molecules?"

Oh, he just wanted to know, he said.

So, on the way across the bridge, I gave it him more or less from the book—molecular theory and all the rest of it. But, from the childish questions he put, it was plain that he hadn't got the hang of it at all. "Did the molecular theory allow things to pass through one another?" he wanted to know; "*Could* things pass through one another?" and a lot of ridiculous things like that. I gave it up.

"You're a genius in your own way, Rooum," I said finally; "you know these things without the books we plodders have to depend on. If I'd luck like that I think I should be content with it."

But he didn't seem satisfied, though he dropped the matter for that time. But I had his acquaintance, which was more than most of us had. He asked me rather timidly, if I'd lend him a book or two. I did so, but they didn't seem to contain what he wanted to know, and he soon returned them, without remark.

Now you'd expect a fellow to be specially sensitive, one way or another, who can tell when there's water a hundred feet beneath him; and as you know, the big men are squabbling yet about this water-finding business. But, somehow, the water-finding puzzled me less than it did that Rooum should be extraordinarily sensitive to something far commoner and easier to understand—ordinary echoes. He couldn't stand echoes. He'd go a mile round rather than pass a place that he knew had an echo; and if he came on one by chance, sometimes he'd hurry through

## ROOM

as quick as he could, and sometimes he'd loiter and listen very intently. I rather joked about this at first, till I found it really distressed him; then, of course, I pretended not to notice. We're all cranky somewhere, and for that matter I can't touch a spider myself.

For the remarkable thing that overtook Room (that, by the way, is an odd way to put it, as you'll see presently; but the words came that way into my head, so let them stand) for the remarkable thing that overtook Room, I don't think I can begin better than with the first time, or very soon after the first time, that I noticed this peculiarity about the echoes.

It was early on a particularly dismal November evening, and this time we were somewhere out south-east London way, just beyond what they are pleased to call the building-line—you know these districts of wretched trees and grimy fields and market-gardens that are about the same to real country that a slum is to a town. It rained that night; rain was the most appropriate weather for the brickfields and sewage farms and yards of old carts and railway-sleepers we were passing. The rain shone on the black hand-bag that Room always carried; and I sucked at the dottle of a pipe that it was too much trouble to fill and light again. We were walking in the direction of Lewisham, and were still a little way from that eruption of red-brick houses that . . . but you've doubtless seen them.

You know how, when they're laying out new roads, they lay down the narrow strip of kerb first, with neither setts on the one hand nor flag-stones on the other? We had come upon one of these. I had noticed how, as we had come a few minutes before under a tall hollow-ringing railway arch, Room had all at once stopped talking—it was the echo, of course that bothered him. The unmade road to which we had come had headless lamp-standards at intervals, and ramparts of grey road-metal ready for

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use; and save for the strip of kerb, it was a broth of mud and stiff clay. A red light or two showed where the road-barriers were—they were laying the mains; a green railway light showed on an embankment; and the Lewisham lamps made a rusty glare through the rain. Rooum went first, walking along the narrow strip of kerb.

The lamp-standards were a little difficult to see, and when I heard Rooum stop suddenly and draw in his breath sharply, I thought he had walked into one of them.

"Hurt yourself?" I said.

He walked on without replying; but half a dozen yards on he stopped again. He was listening again. He waited for me to come up.

"I say," he said, in an odd sort of voice, "go a yard or two ahead, will you?"

"What's the matter?" I asked, as I passed ahead. He didn't answer.

Well, I hadn't been leading for more than a minute before he wanted to change again. He was breathing very quick and short.

"Why, what ails you?" I demanded, stopping.

"It's all right. . . . You're not playing any tricks, are you?" I saw him pass his hand over his brow.

"Come, get on," I said shortly; and we didn't speak again till we struck the pavement with the lighted lamps. Then I happened to glance at him.

"Here," I said brusquely, taking him by the sleeve, "you're not well. We'll call somewhere and get a drink."

"Yes," he said, again wiping his brow. "I say . . . did you hear?"

"Hear what?"

"Ah, you didn't . . . and of course, you didn't feel anything. . . ."

"Come, you're shaking."

## ROOUM

When presently we came to a brightly lighted public-house, I saw that he was shaking even worse than I had thought. The shirt-sleeved barman noticed it, too, and watched us curiously. I made Rooum sit down, and got him some brandy.

"What was the matter?" I asked, as I held the glass to his lips.

But I could get nothing out of him except that it was "All right—all right," with his head twitching over his shoulder almost as if he had a touch of the dance. He wasn't the kind of man you'd press for explanations, and presently we set out again. He walked with me as far as my lodgings, refused to come in, but for all that lingered at the gate as if loath to leave. I watched him turn the corner in the rain.

We came home together again the next evening, but by a different way, quite half a mile longer. He had waited for me a little pertinaciously. It seemed he wanted to talk about molecules again.

Well, when a man of his age—he'd be near fifty—begins to ask questions, he's rather worse than a child who wants to know where Heaven is or some such thing—for you can't put him off as you can the child. Somewhere or other he'd picked up the word "osmosis," and seemed to have some glimmering of its meaning. He dropped the molecules and began to ask me about osmosis.

"It means, doesn't it, that liquids will work their way into one another—through a bladder or something? Say a thick fluid and a thin: you'll find some of the thick in the thin, and the thin in the thick?"

"Yes. The thick into the thin is ex-osmosis, and the other end-osmosis. That takes place more quickly. But I don't know a deal about it."

"Does it ever take place with solids?" he next asked.



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What was he driving at, I thought; but replied: "I believe that what is commonly called 'adhesion' is something of the sort under another name."

"A good deal of this bookwork seems to be finding a dozen names for the same thing," he grunted; and continued to ask his questions.

But what it was he really wanted to know I couldn't for the life of me make out.

Well, he was due any time now to disappear again, having worked quite six weeks in one place; and he disappeared. He disappeared for a good many weeks. I think it would be about February before I saw or heard of him again.

It was February weather, anyway, and in an echoing enough place that I found him—the subway of one of the Metropolitan stations. He'd probably forgotten the echoes when he'd taken the train but, of course, the railway folk won't let a man who happens to dislike echoes go wandering across the metals where he likes.

He was twenty yards ahead when I saw him. I recognised him by his patched beard and black bag. I ran along the subway after him.

It was very curious. He'd been walking close to the white-tiled wall, and I saw him suddenly stop; but he didn't turn. He didn't even turn when I pulled up, close behind him; he put out one hand to the wall, as if to steady himself. But, the moment I touched his shoulder, he just dropped—just dropped, half on his knees against the white tiling. The face he turned round and up to me was transfixed with fright.

There were half a hundred people about—a train was just in—and it isn't a difficult matter in London to get a crowd for much less than a man crouching terrified against a wall, looking over his shoulder as Rooum looked, at another man almost as terrified. I felt somebody's hand

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on my own arm. Evidently somebody thought I'd knocked Rooum down.

The terror went slowly from his face. He stumbled to his feet. I shook myself free of the man who held me and stepped up to Rooum.

"What the devil's all this about?" I demanded, roughly enough.

"It's all right . . . it's all right . . ." he stammered.

"Heavens, man, you shouldn't play tricks like that!"

"No . . . no . . . but for the love of God don't do it again! . . ."

"We'll not explain here," I said, still in a good deal of a huff; and the small crowd melted away—disappointed, I dare say, that it wasn't a fight.

"Now," I said, when we were outside in the crowded street, "you might let me know what all this is about, and what it is that for the love of God I am not to do again."

He was half apologetic, but at the same time half blustering, as if I had committed some sort of outrage.

"A senseless thing like that!" he mumbled to himself. "But there: you didn't know. . . . You don't know, do you? . . . I tell you, d'you hear, *you are not to run at all when I'm about!* You're a nice fellow and all that, and get your quantities somewhere near right, if you do go a long way round to do it—but I'll not answer for myself if you run, d'you hear? . . . Putting your hand on a man's shoulder like that, just when. . . ."

"Certainly I might have spoken," I agreed, a little stiffly.

"Of course you ought to have spoken! Just you see you don't do it again. It's monstrous."

I put a curt question.

"Are you sure you are quite right in your head, Rooum?"

"Ah," he cried, "don't you think I just fancy it, my lad! Nothing so easy. I thought you guessed that other

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time, on the new road . . . it's as plain as a pikestaff . . . no, no, no! *I* shall be telling *you* something about molecules one of these days!"

We walked for a time in silence.

Suddenly he asked: "What are you doing now?"

"I myself, do you mean? Oh, the firm. A railway job, past Pinner. But we've a big contract coming on in the West End soon they might want you for. They call it 'alterations,' but it's one of these big shop-rebuildings."

"I'll come along."

"Oh, it isn't for a month or two yet."

"I don't mean that. I mean I'll come along to Pinner with you now, to-night, or whenever you go."

"Oh!" I said.

I didn't know that I specially wanted him. It's a little wearing, the company of a chap like that. You never know what he's going to let you in for next. But, as this didn't seem to occur to him, I didn't say anything. If he really liked catching the last train down, a three-mile walk, and then sharing a double-bedded room at a poor sort of ale-house (which was my own programme), he was welcome. We walked a little further; then I told him the time of the train and left him.

He turned up at Euston, a little after twelve. We went down together. It was getting on for one when we left the station at the other end, and then we began the tramp across the Weald to the inn. A little to my surprise (for I had begun to expect unaccountable behaviour from him) we reached the inn without Rooum having dodged about changing places with me, or having fallen cowering under a gorse-bush, or anything of that kind. Our talk, too, was about work, not molecules and osmosis.

The inn was only a roadside beerhouse—I have forgotten its name—and all its sleeping accommodation was the one double-bedded room. Over the head of my own

## ROOUM

bed the ceiling was cut away, following the roof-line; and the wallpaper was perfectly shocking—faded bouquets that made V's and A's, interlacing everywhere. The other bed was made up, and lay across the room.

I think I only spoke once while we were making ready for bed, and that was when Rooum took from his black hand-bag a brush and a torn nightshirt.

"That's what you always carry about, is it?" I remarked; and Rooum grunted something: "Yes . . . never knew where you'd be next . . . no harm was it?" We tumbled into bed.

But, for all the lateness of the hour, I wasn't sleepy; so from my own bag I took a book, set the candle on the edge of the mantel, and began to read. Mark you, I don't say I was much better informed for the reading I did, for I was watching the V's on the wallpaper mostly—that, and wondering what was wrong with the man in the other bed, who had fallen down at a touch in the subway. He was already asleep.

I don't know whether I can make the next clear to you. I'm quite certain he was sound asleep, so that it wasn't just the fact that he spoke. Even that is a little unpleasant I think—any form of sleep-talking. But it is a very queer sort of sensation when a man actually answers a question that's put to him, knowing nothing whatever about it in the morning. Perhaps I ought not to have put that question; having put it, I did the next best thing afterwards, as you'll see in a moment . . . but let me tell you.

He'd been asleep perhaps an hour, and I wool-gathering about the wallpaper, when suddenly, in a far more clear and loud voice than he ever used when awake, he said:

*"What the devil is it prevents me seeing him, then?"*

That startled me, rather, for the second time that evening; and I really think I had spoken before I had fully realized what was happening.

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"From seeing whom?" I said, sitting up in bed.

"Whom? . . . You're not attending. The fellow I'm telling you about, who runs after me," he answered—answered perfectly plainly.

I could see his head there on the pillow, black and white, and his eyes were closed. He made a slight movement with his arm, but that did not wake him. Then it came to me, with a sort of start, what was happening. I slipped half out of bed. Would he—would he?—answer another question? . . . I risked it, breathlessly.

"Have you any idea who he is?"

Well, that too he answered.

"Who is he? The Runner? . . . Don't be silly. *Who else should it be?*"

With every nerve in me tingling, I tried again. "What happens, then, when he catches you?"

This time, I really don't know whether his words were an answer or not; they were these:

"To hear him catching you up . . . and then padding away ahead again! All right, all right . . . but I guess it's weakening *him* a bit, too. . . ."

Without noticing it, I had got out of bed, and had advanced quite to the middle of the floor.

"What did you say his name was?" I breathed.

But that was a dead failure. He muttered brokenly for a moment, gave a deep, troubled sigh, and then began to snore loudly and regularly.

I made my way back to bed; but I assure you that before I did so I filled my basin with water, dipped my face into it, and then set the candlestick afloat in it, leaving the candle burning. I thought I'd like to have a light. . . . It had burned down by morning. Rooum, I remember, remarked on the silly practice of reading in bed.

Well, it was a pretty kind of obsession for a man to have, wasn't it? Somebody running after him all the



## ROOUM

time, and then . . . running on ahead? And, of course, on a broad pavement there would be plenty of room for this running gentleman to run around; but on an eight- or nine-inch kerb, such as that of the new road out Lewisham way . . . but perhaps he was a jumping gentleman, too, and could jump over a man's head. You'd think he'd have to get past some way, wouldn't you? . . . I remember vaguely wondering whether the name of that Runner wasn't Conscience, but Conscience isn't a matter of molecules and osmosis. . . .

One thing, however, was clear; I'd got to tell Room what I'd learned: for you can't get hold of a fellow's secrets in ways like that. I lost no time about it. I told him, in fact, soon after we'd left the inn the next morning—told him how he'd answered in his sleep.

And—what do you think of this?—he seemed to think I ought to have guessed it! *Guessed* a monstrous thing like that!

"You're less clever than I thought, with your books and that, if you didn't," he grunted.

"But . . . good God, man!"

"Queer, isn't it? But you don't know the queerest. . . ."

He pondered for a moment, and then suddenly put his lips to my ear. "I'll tell you," he whispered. "*It gets harder every time!* . . . At first, he just slipped through; a bit of a catch at my heart, like when you nod off to sleep in a chair and jerk up awake again; and away he went. But now it's getting grinding, sluggish; and the pain. . . . You'd notice, that night on the road, the little check it gave me; that's past long since; and last night, when I'd just braced myself up stiff to meet it, and you tapped me on the shoulder. . . ." He passed the back of his hand over his brow.

"I tell you," he continued, "it's an agony each time. I

could scream at the thought of it. It's oftener, too, now, and he's getting stronger. The end-osmosis is getting to be ex-osmosis—is that right? Just let me tell you one more thing—"

But I'd had enough. I'd asked questions the night before, but now—well, I knew quite as much as, and more than, I wanted.

"Stop, please," I said. "You're either off your head, or worse. Let's call it the first. Don't tell me any more, please."

"Frightened, what? Well, I don't blame you. But what would *you* do?"

"I should see a doctor; I'm only an engineer," I replied.

"Doctors? . . . Bah!" he said, and spat.

I hope you see how the matter stood with Room. What do you make of it? Could you have believed it—*do* you believe it? . . . He'd made a nearish guess when he'd said that much of our knowledge is giving names to things we know nothing about; only rule-of-thumb Physics think everything's explained in the Manual; and you've always got to remember one thing: You can call it Force or whatever you like, but it's a certainty that things, solid things of wood and iron and stone, would explode, just go off in a puff into space, if it wasn't for something just as inexplicable as that that Room said he felt in his own person. And if you can swallow that, it's a relatively small matter whether Room's light-footed Familiar slipped through him unperceived or had to struggle through obstinately. You see now why I said that "a queer thing overtook Room."

More: I saw it. This thing, that outrages reason—I saw it happen. That is to say, I saw its effects, and it was in broad daylight, on an ordinary afternoon, in the middle of Oxford Street, of all places. There wasn't a shadow of doubt about it. People were pressing and jostling

## ROOUM

about him, and suddenly I saw him turn his head and listen, as I'd seen him before, I tell you, an icy creeping ran all over my skin. I fancied *I* felt it approaching, too, nearer and nearer. . . . The next moment he had made a sort of gathering of himself, as if against a gust. He stumbled and thrust—thrust with his body. He swayed physically, as a tree sways in a wind; he clutched my arm and gave a loud scream. Then, after seconds—minutes—I don't know how long—he was free again.

And for the colour of his face, by-and-by, I glanced at it . . . well, I once saw a swarthy Italian fall under a sunstroke, and *his* face was much the same colour that Rooum's negro face had gone; a cloudy, whitish green.

"Well—you've seen it—what do you think of it?" he gasped presently, turning a ghastly grin on me.

But it was night before the full horror of it had soaked into me.

Soon after that he disappeared again. I wasn't sorry.

Our big contract in the West End came on. It was a time-contract, with all manner of penalty clauses if we didn't get through; and I assure you that we were busy. I myself was far too busy to think of Rooum.

It's a shop now, the place we were working at, or rather one of these huge weldings of fifty shops where you can buy anything; and if you'd seen us there . . . but perhaps you did see us, for people stood up on the tops of omnibuses as they passed, to look over the mud-splashed hoarding into the great excavation we'd made. It was a sight. Staging rose on staging, tier on tier, with interminable ladders all over the steel structure. Three or four squat Otis lifts crouched like iron turtles on top, and a lattice-crane on a towering three-cornered platform rose a hundred and twenty feet into the air. At one end of the vast quarry was a demolished house, showing flues and

fireplaces and a score of thicknesses of old wallpaper; and at night—they might well have stood up on the tops of the buses! A dozen great spluttering violet arc-lights half-blinded you; down below were the watchmen's fires; overhead, the riveters had their fire-baskets; and in odd corners naphtha-lights guttered and flared. And the steel rang with the riveter's hammers, and the crane-chains rattled and clashed. . . . There's not much doubt in my mind, it's the engineers who are the architects nowadays. The chaps who think they're the architects are only a sort of paperhangers, who hang brick and terra-cotta on our work and clap a pinnacle or two on top—but never mind that. There we were, sweating and clanging and navvying, till the day shift came to relieve us.

And I ought to say that fifty feet above our great gap, and from end to end across it, there ran a travelling crane on a skeleton line, with platform, engine, and wooden cab all compact in one.

It happened that they had pitched in as one of the foremen some friend of the firm's, a rank duffer, who pestered me incessantly with his questions. I did half his work and all my own, and it hadn't improved my temper much. On this night that I'm telling about, he'd been playing the fool with his questions as if a time-contract was a sort of summer holiday; and he'd filled me up to that point that I really can't say when it was that Rooum put in an appearance again. I think I *had* heard somebody mention his name, but I'd paid no attention.

Well, our Johnnie Fresh came up to me for the twentieth time that night, this time wanting to know something about the overhead crane. At that I fairly lost my temper.

"What ails the crane?" I cried. "It's doing its work, isn't it? Isn't everybody doing their work except you? Why can't you ask Hopkins? Isn't Hopkins there?"

## ROOUM

"I don't know," he said.

"Then," I snapped, "in that particular I'm as ignorant as you, and I hope it's the only one."

But he grabbed my arm.

"Look at it now!" he cried, pointing; and I looked up.

Either Hopkins or somebody was dangerously exceeding the speed-limit. The thing was flying along its thirty yards of rail as fast as a tram, and the heavy fall-blocks swung like a ponderous kite-tail, thirty feet below. As I watched, the engine brought up within a yard of the end of the way, the blocks crashed like a ram into the broken house—and, fetching down plaster and brick, and then the mechanism was reversed. The crane set off at a tear back.

"Who in Hell . . ." I began; but it wasn't a time to talk. "*Hi!*" I yelled, and made a spring for a ladder.

The others had noticed it, too, for there were shouts all over the place. By that time I was half-way up the second stage. Again the crane tore past, with the massive tackle sweeping behind it, and again I heard the crash at the other end. Whoever had the handling of it was managing it skillfully, for there was barely a foot to spare when it turned again.

On the fourth platform, at the end of the way, I found Hopkins. He was white, and seemed to be counting on his fingers.

"What's the matter here?" I cried.

"It's Rooum," he answered. "I hadn't stepped out of the cab, not a minute, when I heard the lever go. He's running somebody down, he says; he'll run the whole shoot down in a minute—look! . . ."

The crane was coming back again. Half out of the cab I could see Rooum's mottled hair and beard. His brow was ribbed like a gridiron, and as he ripped past one of the arcs his face shone like porcelain with the sweat that bathed it.



"Now . . . you! . . . *Now*, damn you! . . ." he was shouting.

"Get ready to board him when he reverses!" I shouted to Hopkins. Just how we scrambled on I don't know. I got one arm over the lifting-gear (which, of course, wasn't going), and heard Hopkins on the other footplate. Room put the brakes down and reversed; again came the thud of the fall-blocks and we were speeding back again over the gulf of misty orange light. The stagings were thronged with gaping men.

"Ready? Now!" I cried to Hopkins; and we sprang into the cab.

Hopkins hit Room's wrist with a spanner. Then he seized the lever, jammed the brake down and tripped Room, all, as it seemed, in one movement. I fell on top of Room. The crane came to a standstill half-way down the line. I held Room panting.

But either Room was stronger than I, or else he took me very much unawares. All at once he twisted clear of my grasp, and stumbled on his knees to the rear door of the cab. He threw up one elbow, and staggered to his feet as I made another clutch at him.

"Keep still, you fool!" I bawled. "Hit him over the head, Hopkins."

Room screamed in a high voice.

"Run him down—cut him up with the wheels—down, you!—down, I say—Oh, my God! . . . *Ha!*"

He sprang clear out from the crane door, well-nigh taking me with him.

I told you it was a skeleton line, two rails and a tie or two. He'd actually jumped to the right-hand rail. And he was running along it—running along that iron tight-rope, out over that well of light and watching men. Hopkins had started the travelling gear, as if with some insane idea of catching him; but there was only one possible end

## ROOUM

to it. He'd gone fully a dozen yards, while I watched, horribly fascinated; and then I saw the turn of his head. . . .

He didn't meet it this time; he sprang to the other rail, as if to evade it. . . .

Even at the take-off he missed. As far as I could see, he made no attempt to save himself with his hands. He just went down out of the field of my vision. There was an awful silence; then, from far below. . . . They weren't the men on the lower stages who moved first. The men above went a little way down, and then they, too, stopped. Presently two of them descended, but by a distant way.

I, Hopkins tells me, had got down on my knees in the crane cab, and was jabbering away cheerfully to myself. When I asked him what I said, he hesitated, and then said: "Oh, you don't want to know that, sir," and I haven't asked him since.

What do *you* make of it?

# THE GRAY MEN

By REBECCA WEST

I MUST begin the account of my experience by setting down my misfortunes, not in order that I may enjoy the delights of querulousness, but because I would not have had this experience if I had not been in a peculiar physical state. At the end of August I went down for a holiday to a remote village in Cornwall, and after a few days was taken ill with blood-poisoning and transported to a nursing home in one of the largest mining towns. I was in a state to respond extravagantly to the infection, because I had been in bad health for some years and for the last eighteen months I had been more or less continuously ill; and when I caught the germ I could not get well. My temperature sank to normal but the rate of my pulse and respiration was greatly excessive, amounting sometimes to twice what it ought to have been. I suffered from persistent insomnia; very often I would not fall asleep till after the mine hooters had gone, and an hour and a half later I would be awakened for breakfast by the implacable routine of the nursing home. So I fell into a curious state. I lost my power of suppressing irrelevant impressions and co-ordinating those that remained. I felt obliged to watch the trees outside my window and their behaviour in the sunshine and wind, to note the characteristics of every person who spoke to me, with a quite disagreeable intensity, and I was so fatigued by this constant effort of apprehension that there was no continuity in the working of my brain. Every moment of consciousness was distinct and unrelated to any other.

## THE GRAY MEN

Instead of being a stream my mental life was a string of disparate beads.

There came a Monday when I was told I could go back to London two days later; and in the afternoon I was sent out to take a little walk round the town. The walk I chose was one straight up the face of a high heathery hill, with an obelisk and a tower on the humps of its saddle-back, which stands a mile or so outside the town. I knew it was unwise, but I had heard there was a fine view of the North Coast from the obelisk, and I was sick of being prevented from doing things by my health. But when I got to the top I realised that the ascent had, as they say, put the lid on it. I could not see the view. I could see it in bits but not as a whole. It was like trying to take a photograph of a view with a non-panoramic camera. And what I saw seemed like meaningless painting on glass. The patchwork of colours carried no suggestion of textures and contours. I had to work hard to interpret it, to see, for example, that that spattered rhomboidal patch was a cornfield, starred with arrish mows, that rolled its fourth corner over the bend of the hill. But I did not look at it for long, because two miners and their dogs came up onto the plateau round the obelisk, and my exaggerated disordered perceptions took too much notice of them. This hill was certainly large enough to support these four inoffensive creatures as well as myself, but I felt as irritated and uncomfortable as if I were being jostled by a dense crowd. I went down the hill and walked home, realising at every step that my mechanism was hopelessly out of gear, and that I was in a thoroughly abnormal condition.

This feeling of strangeness remained throughout the evening till I fell asleep about midnight; and about three hours later I began to dream. I thought I awoke with a sense of imminent danger, and that I got out of bed and

ran to the window. The nursing home consisted of two three-storeyed semi-detached villas knocked into one; the two porches had been left as they were in the middle of the frontage, and the two broad gravel walks that had run from the gate of each villa-garden to its porch had been joined and now formed a semi-circular drive. I was sleeping in the ground-floor room to the right of the porches and, as it was built on a half-basement that rose out of its well to an exceptional height, I had a good view over the garden from my large bay-window. To my surprise, for vehicles were supposed to stop in the road outside the gate lest they should disturb the patients, a large grey limousine was drawn up in front of the porch. As I looked at it I began to shake with fear, for sitting in the front seat were two men of terrifying appearance. They were dressed in a uniform which was rather like that of the A. A. scouts, but cut very tightly of midnight blue cloth, and their heads were covered with aviators' helmets. They sat there with an inhuman immobility. They were the most sinister people I had ever seen. They were not diabolical, but they were inexorable. And I realised they had come here with the intention of abducting somebody from the home, and I began to run to the door so that I could rouse the household.

But as I crossed the floor I saw, not with the physical eye, for there was a wall and a door of frosted glass and wood in between, but with what the saints and mystics have called "the eye of the mind," that there was another man like these, standing on the balcony that opened off my room on the side that was at right angles to the frontage. I stood a moment wondering how he had got there, for no steps led to it from the garden, and it stood on smooth iron pillars rather above the height of a man, and I then went to the door. But I could not open it because there was a similar watchman guarding the other side of



## THE GRAY MEN

the door. I was conscious, somehow, of a thin cold stream of breath coming from between his lips. At that I realised that I could do nothing. I could not help the poor creature who was even now being laid hands on by the confederates of these people.

There was something very sinister about the way these sentinels were standing with their backs to the entrances they guarded. It suggested that they did not need to keep their fists ready to prevent my escape but could rely on some invisible emanation from their bodies.

Then, high up on the staircase of the other villa there sounded muffled, thudding noises which became recognisable while they descended from third flight to second flight, from second flight to first, as the footsteps of men carrying an unwieldy burthen.

I became aware that they were carrying a man or woman wrapped in some kind of envelope from which he or she was partly protruding. I visualized it that two of these men were carrying downstairs a person who had been put into one of these large unbleached calico bags in which one keeps one's fur coat, and who had succeeded in getting his head above the draw-string at the top. I knew that this wasn't exactly what the men were carrying, that it was merely a metaphorical image for something I did not like my mind to perceive directly. Here for the first time I detected myself trying to interfere with the dream; to forget it, as it were. I went on trying to recognise the person in the bag as a friend of mine whom I knew to be in very dangerous circumstances, obviously with the intention of explaining away the dream by interpreting it symbolically. But I could not keep it up. And I gave up the attempt when they passed through the hall and the captured person cried out to them—"Say something to me" and then sobbed softly, "Oh, if they would only tell me who they are and where they are taking me."

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They did not reply. In silence they carried the person down the steep stone steps of the porch and lifted him or her into the car which immediately started. I followed it for a little way along the road, watching the poor thing as it turned to its immobile captors and, flapping its pinioned arms, pleaded to know what was going to happen to it.

I half awoke; and in that borderland state tossed about and tried to pretend that it was not really a terrifying dream.

"What a situation for the movies," I muttered and tried to work out a plot to lead up to it. Then I really woke up and realised the dream had been one of the most horrible things that had ever happened to me and I then passed immediately into a vivid recollection of an incident of my childhood.

I was eight or nine. I was having tea, in a room with folding doors, with two women. Behind the folding doors an old lady lay dead. We heard the padding of a cat about the room, the sound of its spring onto the creaking bedstead.

"Naughty kitty's jumped onto the bed. Go in and fetch kitty, dear." I had never liked the old lady's obese body, and when I was told to go into the room where she lay dead it appeared to me possible that death might have given her new resources of ugliness. She was probably looking dreadful. I cried so much that they did not make me go, but my imagination had been set working. . . .

I shuddered out of this memory, but found myself obsessed by thoughts of death as a harsh abduction to a place of decay. I remembered a thousand threats I had noticed, that the other side of death might be torment and petrification. I felt that I was going to die soon, and I was possessed by fear and by resentments against the people who had wasted my life by their demands. Then I burst

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into the exhausted weeping that follows prolonged pain and lay crying till it was broad daylight.

I woke with the worst headache I have ever had in my life. All the morning I was heavy with it, and in the afternoon it had grown so intolerable that they gave me a heavy dose of aspirin. In the evening I became very restless and could not bring myself to undress and go to bed. At half-past ten I was sitting wondering when the night nurse would come and rebuke me for my late hours, when I heard the sound of one of the gates being opened and wheels coming along the drive.

"That is the car I dreamed of last night," I said to myself.

The horror did not revisit me; I even felt what psychologists call the pleasure of recognition. I was on the point of going to the window when my natural scepticism reasserted itself and I sat down again.

"Nonsense, that was a dream. Besides . . . it was a car I saw. This is something drawn by a horse."

I heard people coming up the stone steps and going through the hall. I tried to pretend that really all this was not of the slightest importance and began to undress; but presently I was compelled to go to the window and look out. There was nothing but a little low cart drawn by a sturdy pony. I said to myself that the most probable explanation of its presence there was a late delivery of the washing. But all the time I knew with absolute certainty that I was watching the incident of which my dream had been the fantastic rehearsal, and I was not surprised when I heard those muffled footsteps coming down the staircase of the other villa and passing through the hall as I had heard them the night before. I was not surprised when two men carried out a coffin and laid it in the cart.

I have the intensest desire to believe that the soul is mortal and perishes with the body. But it is really

very difficult for me not to suspect that I became aware of the death of this woman who had died the previous evening in a room on the third storey, by supernatural means. I had not come in contact with anyone who had been present at her death or was aware of it, as I had seen none of the day-nurses after tea-time. She had not been expected to die; therefore I could not have derived my sense of the corpse in the house from anything in the conversation or manner of the people about me. And as I believed that only nurses slept on the third storey, I had not the slightest reason for my accurate location of the deathbed. I am forced to go a little further than this. I cannot deny that all my emotions are convinced that I overheard the tribulation of a soul that was terrified at finding itself stripped of the flesh in a world not this earth.

I wish greatly that I had not had this experience. I am amazed at the temerity of those people, spiritualists and the like, who try to force these unnatural contacts with life after it has been subjected to the extreme change of death. For the human mind, exquisitely adapted as it is to the task of carrying its possessor through the material world, is, I think, unable to handle life in that altered state. My mechanism, having gone out of gear, intercepted the emotions of a person who had passed into that different world; emotions that no doubt, if I could have understood them, were not more significant, not more incompatible with the scheme of a kindly universe, than the weeping of a newborn child. But my earthly mind could not deal with it. The special weakness that had made me liable to this revelation made me link it up with childish fears and clothe it in symbolism inspired by an infantile conception of death that I knew to be untrue. I am quite sure that it is untrue; for though there is, as I have learned, much that is disagreeable in this universe and an almost profligate

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abundance of pain, I have never found any scrap of evidence in support of the existence of bogeys. But the reality that was contained in my experience gives a sanction to the rubbish with which my imagination surrounded it and has therefore made that infantile conception take fresh root in my mind. I was degraded; I am more subject to terror than I was. To me, for some little time to come, till I find my footing again, it will seem as if death has its sting and the grave its victory. I can imagine no more rash challenge to fear than the voluntary seeking of such an experience.



# THE MOTH

By H. G. WELLS

PROBABLY you have heard of Hapley—not W. T. Hapley, the son, but the celebrated Hapley, the Hapley of *Periplaneta Hapliia*, Hapley the entomologist.

If so you know at least of the great feud between Hapley and Professor Pawkins, though certain of its consequences may be new to you. For those who have not, a word or two of explanation is necessary, which the idle reader may go over with a glancing eye, if his indolence so incline him.

It is amazing how very widely diffused is the ignorance of such really important matters as this Hapley-Pawkins feud. Those epoch-making controversies, again, that have convulsed the Geological Society are, I verily believe, almost entirely unknown outside the fellowship of that body. I have heard men of fair general education, even refer to the great scenes at these meetings as vestry-meeting squabbles. Yet the great hate of the English and Scotch geologists has lasted now half a century, and has "left deep and abundant marks upon the body of the science." And this Hapley-Pawkins business, though perhaps a more personal affair, stirred passions as profound, if not profounder. Your common man has no conception of the zeal that animates a scientific investigator, the fury of contradiction you can arouse in him. It is the *odium theologicum* in a new form. There are men, for instance, who would gladly burn Professor Ray Lankester at Smithfield

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## THE MOTH

for his treatment of the *Mollusca* in the *Encyclopaedia*. That fantastic extension of the *Cephalopods* to cover the *Pteropods*. . . . But I wander from Hapley and Pawkins.

It began years and years ago, with a revision of the *Microlepidoptera* (whatever these may be) by Pawkins, in which he extinguished a new species created by Hapley. Hapley, who was always quarrelsome, replied by a stinging impeachment of the entire classification of Pawkins.\* Pawkins in his "Rejoinder" † suggested that Hapley's microscope was as defective as his power of observation, and called him an "irresponsible meddler"—Hapley was not a professor at that time. Hapley, in his retort, ‡ spoke of "blundering collectors," and described, as if inadvertently, Pawkins' revision as a "miracle of ineptitude." It was war to the knife. However, it would scarcely interest the reader to detail how these two great men quarrelled, and how the split between them widened until from the *Microlepidoptera* they were at war upon every open question in entomology. There were memorable occasions. At times the Royal Entomological Society meetings resembled nothing so much as the Chamber of Deputies. On the whole, I fancy Pawkins was nearer the truth than Hapley. But Hapley was skilful with his rhetoric, had a turn for ridicule rare in a scientific man, was endowed with vast energy, and had a fine sense of injury in the matter of the extinguished species; while Pawkins was a man of dull presence, prosy of speech, in shape not unlike a water-barrel, over conscientious with testimonials, and suspected of jobbing museum appointments. So the young men gathered round Hapley and applauded him. It was a long struggle, vicious from the beginning and growing at last

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\* "Remarks on a Recent Revision of *Microlepidoptera*," *Quart. Journ. Entomological Soc.*, 1863.

† "Rejoinder to Certain Remarks," etc., *Ibid.* 1864.

‡ "Further Remarks," etc., *Ibid.*

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to pitiless antagonism. The successive turns of fortune, now an advantage to one side and now to another—now Hapley tormented by some success of Pawkins, and now Pawkins outshone by Hapley, belong rather to the history of entomology than to this story.

But in 1891 Pawkins, whose health had been bad for some time, published some work upon the "mesoblast" of the Death's Head Moth. What the mesoblast of the Death's Head Moth may be does not matter a rap in this story. But the work was far below his usual standard, and gave Hapley an opening he had coveted for years. He must have worked night and day to make the most of his advantage.

In an elaborate critique he rent Pawkins to tatters—one can fancy the man's disordered black hair, and his queer dark eyes flashing as he went for his antagonist—and Pawkins made a reply, halting, ineffectual, with painful gaps of silence, and yet malignant. There was no mistaking his will to wound Hapley, nor his incapacity to do it. But few of those who heard him—I was absent from that meeting—realised how ill the man was.

Hapley got his opponent down, and meant to finish him. He followed with a simply brutal attack upon Pawkins, in the form of a paper upon the development of moths in general, a paper showing evidence of a most extraordinary amount of mental labour, and yet couched in a violently controversial tone. Violent as it was, an editorial note witnesses that it was modified. It must have covered Pawkins with shame and confusion of face. It left no loophole; it was murderous in argument, and utterly contemptuous in tone; an awful thing for the declining years of a man's career.

The world of entomologists waited breathlessly for the rejoinder from Pawkins. He would try one, for Pawkins

## THE MOTH

had always been game. But when it came it surprised them. For the rejoinder of Pawkins was to catch influenza, proceed to pneumonia, and die.

It was perhaps as effectual a reply as he could make under the circumstances, and largely turned the current of feeling against Hapley. The very people who had most gleefully cheered on those gladiators became serious at the consequence. There could be no reasonable doubt that the fret of the defeat had contributed to the death of Pawkins. There was a limit even to scientific controversy, said serious people. Another crushing attack was already in the Press and appeared on the day before the funeral. I don't think Hapley exerted himself to stop it. People remembered how Hapley had hounded down his rival, and forgot that rival's defects. Scathing satire reads ill over fresh mould. The thing provoked comment in the daily papers. This it was that made me think that you had probably heard of Hapley and this controversy. But, as I have already remarked, scientific workers live very much in a world of their own; half the people, I dare say, who go along Piccadilly to the academy every year, could not tell you where the learned societies abide. Many even think that research is a kind of happy-family cage in which all kinds of men lie down together in peace.

In his private thoughts Hapley could not forgive Pawkins for dying. In the first place, it was a mean dodge to escape the absolute pulverisation Hapley had in hand for him, and in the second, it left Hapley's mind with a queer gap in it. For twenty years he had worked hard, sometimes far into the night, and seven days a week, with microscope, scalpel, collecting-net, and pen, and almost entirely with reference to Pawkins. The European reputation he had won had come as an incident in that great antipathy. He had gradually worked up to a climax in this last controversy. It had killed Pawkins, but it had

also thrown Hapley out of gear, so to speak, and his doctor advised him to give up work for a time, and rest. So Hapley went down into a quiet village in Kent, and thought day and night of Pawkins, and good things it was now impossible to say about him.

At last Hapley began to realise in what direction the pre-occupation tended. He determined to make a fight for it, and started by trying to read novels. But he could not get his mind off Pawkins, white in the face and making his last speech—every sentence a beautiful opening for Hapley. He turned to fiction—and found it had no grip on him. He read the *Island Nights' Entertainments* until his sense of causation was shocked beyond endurance by the Bottle Imp. Then he went to Kipling, and found he “proved nothing,” besides being irreverent and vulgar. These scientific people have their limitations. Then, unhappily, he tried Besant's *Inner House*, and the opening chapter set his mind upon learned societies and Pawkins at once.

So Hapley turned to chess, and found it a little more soothing. He soon mastered the moves and the chief gambits and commoner closing positions, and began to beat the Vicar. But then the cylindrical contours of the opposite king began to resemble Pawkins standing up and gasping ineffectually against check-mate, and Hapley decided to give up chess.

Perhaps the study of some new branch of science would after all be better diversion. The best rest is change of occupation. Hapley determined to plunge at diatoms, and had one of his smaller microscopes and Halibut's monograph sent down from London. He thought that perhaps if he could get up a vigorous quarrel with Halibut, he might be able to begin life afresh and forget Pawkins. And very soon he was hard at work in his habitual strenu-



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ous fashion, at these microscopic denizens of the wayside pool.

It was on the third day of the diatoms that Hapley became aware of a novel addition to the local fauna. He was working late at the microscope, and the only light in the room was the brilliant little lamp with the special form of green shade. Like all experienced microscopists, he kept both eyes open. It is the only way to avoid excessive fatigue. One eye was over the instrument, and bright and distinct before that was the circular field of the microscope, across which a brown diatom was slowly moving. With the other eye Hapley saw, as it were, without seeing. He was only dimly conscious of the brass side of the instrument, the illuminated part of the table-cloth, a sheet of notepaper, the foot of the lamp, and the darkened room beyond.

Suddenly his attention drifted from one eye to the other. The table-cloth was of the material called tapestry by shopmen, and rather brightly coloured. The pattern was in gold, with a small amount of crimson and pale blue upon a grayish ground. At one point the pattern seemed displaced, and there was a vibrating movement of the colours at this point.

Hapley suddenly moved his head back and looked with both eyes. His mouth fell open with astonishment.

It was a large moth or butterfly; its wings spread in butterfly fashion!

It was strange it should be in the room at all, for the windows were closed. Strange that it should not have attracted his attention when fluttering to its present position. Strange that it should match the table-cloth. Stranger far that to him, Hapley, the great entomologist, it was altogether unknown. There was no delusion. It was crawling slowly towards the foot of the lamp.

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"New Genus, by heavens! And in England!" said Hapley, staring.

Then he suddenly thought of Pawkins. Nothing would have maddened Pawkins more. . . . And Pawkins was dead!

Something about the head and body of the insect became singularly suggestive of Pawkins, just as the chess king had been.

"Confound Pawkins!" said Hapley. "But I must catch this." And looking round him for some means of capturing the moth, he rose slowly out of his chair. Suddenly the insect rose, struck the edge of the lamp-shade—Hapley heard the "ping"—and vanished into the shadow.

In a moment Hapley had whipped off the shade, so that the whole room was illuminated. The thing had disappeared, but soon his practised eye detected it upon the wall-paper near the door. He went towards it poising the lamp-shade for capture. Before he was within striking distance, however, it had risen and was fluttering round the room. After the fashion of its kind, it flew with sudden starts and turns, seeming to vanish here and reappear there. Once Hapley struck, and missed; then again.

The third time he hit his microscope. The instrument swayed, struck and overturned the lamp, and fell noisily upon the floor. The lamp turned over on the table and, very luckily, went out. Hapley was left in the dark. With a start he felt the strange moth blunder into his face.

It was maddening. He had no lights. If he opened the door of the room the thing would get away. In the darkness he saw Pawkins quite distinctly laughing at him. Pawkins had ever an oily laugh. He swore furiously and stamped his foot on the floor.

There was a timid rapping at the door.

Then it opened, perhaps a foot, and very slowly. The alarmed face of the landlady appeared behind a pink can-

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dle flame; she wore a night-cap over her gray hair and had some purple garment over her shoulders. "What *was* that fearful smash?" she said. "Has anything—" The strange moth appeared fluttering about the chink of the door. "Shut that door!" said Hapley, and suddenly rushed at her.

The door slammed hastily. Hapley was left alone in the dark. Then, in the pause, he heard his landlady scuttle upstairs, lock her door, and drag something heavy across the room and put against it.

It became evident to Hapley that his conduct and appearance had been strange and alarming. Confound the moth! and Pawkins! However, it was a pity to lose the moth now. He felt his way into the hall and found the matches, after sending his hat down upon the floor with a noise like a drum. With the lighted candle he returned to the sitting-room. No moth was to be seen. Yet once for a moment it seemed that the thing was fluttering round his head. Hapley very suddenly decided to give up the moth and go to bed. But he was excited. All night long his sleep was broken by dreams of the moth, Pawkins, and his landlady. Twice in the night he turned out and soused his head in cold water.

One thing was very clear to him. His landlady could not possibly understand about the strange moth, especially as he had failed to catch it. No one but an entomologist would understand quite how he felt. She was probably frightened at his behaviour, and yet he failed to see how he could explain it. He decided to say nothing further about the events of last night. After breakfast he saw her in her garden, and decided to go out and talk to reassure her. He talked to her about beans and potatoes, bees, caterpillars, and the price of fruit. She replied in her usual manner, but she looked at him a little suspiciously, and kept walking as he walked, so that there was always a

bed of flowers, or a row of beans, or something of the sort, between them. After a while he began to feel singularly irritated at this, and to conceal his vexation went indoors and presently went out for a walk.

The moth, or butterfly, trailing an odd flavour of Pawkins with it, kept coming into that walk, though he did his best to keep his mind off it. Once he saw it quite distinctly, with its wings flattened out, upon the old stone wall that runs along the west edge of the park, but going up to it he found it was only two lumps of gray and yellow lichen. "This," said Hapley, "is the reverse of mimicry. Instead of a butterfly looking like a stone, here is a stone looking like a butterfly!" Once something hovered and fluttered round his head, but by an effort of will he drove that impression out of his mind again.

In the afternoon Hapley called upon the Vicar, and argued with him upon theological questions. They sat in a little arbour covered with brier, and smoked as they wrangled. "Look at that moth!" said Hapley, suddenly, pointing to the edge of the wooden table.

"Where?" said the Vicar.

"You don't see a moth on the edge of the table there?" said Hapley.

"Certainly not," said the Vicar.

Hapley was thunderstruck. He gasped. The Vicar was staring at him. Clearly the man saw nothing. "The eye of faith is no better than the eye of science," said Hapley awkwardly.

"I don't see your point," said the Vicar, thinking it was part of the argument.

That night Hapley found the moth crawling over his counterpane. He sat on the edge of the bed in his shirt sleeves and reasoned with himself. Was it pure hallucination? He knew he was slipping, and he battled for his sanity with the same silent energy he had formerly dis-

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played against Pawkins. So persistent is mental habit, that he felt as if it were still a struggle with Pawkins. He was well versed in psychology. He knew that such visual illusions do come as a result of mental strain. But the point was, he did not only *see* the moth, he had heard it when it touched the edge of the lamp-shade, and afterwards when it hit against the wall, and he had felt it strike his face in the dark.

He looked at it. It was not at all dreamlike, but perfectly clear and solid-looking in the candle-light. He saw the hairy body, and the short feathery antennae, the jointed legs, even a place where the down was rubbed from the wing. He suddenly felt angry with himself for being afraid of a little insect.

His landlady had got the servant to sleep with her that night, because she was afraid to be alone. In addition she had locked the door, and put the chest of drawers against it. They listened and talked in whispers after they had gone to bed, but nothing occurred to alarm them. About eleven they had ventured to put the candle out, and had both dozed off to sleep. They woke up with a start, and sat up in bed, listening in the darkness.

Then they heard slippered feet going to and fro in Hapley's room. A chair was overturned, and there was a violent dab at the wall. Then a china mantel ornament smashed upon the fender. Suddenly the door of the room opened, and they heard him upon the landing. They clung to one another, listening. He seemed to be dancing upon the staircase. Now he would go down three or four steps quickly, then up again, then hurry down into the hall. They heard the umbrella stand go over, and the fanlight break. Then the bolt shot and the chain rattled. He was opening the door.

They hurried to the window. It was a dim gray night; an almost unbroken sheet of watery cloud was sweeping



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across the moon, and the hedge and trees in front of the house were black against the pale roadway. They saw Hapley, looking like a ghost in his shirt and white trousers, running to and fro in the road, and beating the air. Now he would stop, now he would dart very rapidly at something invisible, now he would move upon it with stealthy strides. At last he went out of sight up the road towards the down. Then, while they argued who should go down and lock the door, he returned. He was walking very fast, and he came straight into the house, closed the door carefully, and went quietly up to his bedroom. Then everything was silent.

"Mrs. Colville," said Hapley, calling down the staircase next morning, "I hope I did not alarm you last night."

"You may well ask that!" said Mrs. Colville.

"The fact is, I am a sleep-walker, and the last two nights I have been without my sleeping mixture. There is nothing to be alarmed about, really. I am sorry I made such an ass of myself. I will go over the down to Shoreham, and get some stuff to make me sleep soundly. I ought to have done that yesterday."

But half-way over the down, by the chalk pits, the moth came upon Hapley again. He went on, trying to keep his mind upon chess problems, but it was no good. The thing fluttered into his face, and he struck at it with his hat in self-defence. Then rage, the old rage—the rage he had so often felt against Pawkins—came upon him again. He went on, leaping and striking at the eddying insect. Suddenly he trod on nothing, and fell headlong.

There was a gap in his sensations, and Hapley found himself sitting on the heap of flints in front of the opening of the chalk pits, with a leg twisted back under him. The strange moth was still fluttering round his head. He struck at it with his hand, and turning his head saw two men approaching him. One was the village doctor. It

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occurred to Hapley that this was lucky. Then it came into his mind with extraordinary vividness, that no one would ever be able to see the strange moth except himself, and that it behoved him to keep silent about it.

Late that night, however, after his broken leg was set, he was feverish, and forgot his self-restraint. He was lying flat on his bed, and he began to run his eyes round the room to see if the moth was still about. He tried not to do this, but it was no good. He soon caught sight of the thing resting close to his hand, by the night-light, on the green table-cloth. The wings quivered. With a sudden wave of anger he smote at it with his fist, and the nurse woke up with a shriek. He had missed it.

"That moth!" he said; and then, "It was fancy. Nothing."

All the time he could see quite clearly the insect going round the cornice and darting across the room, and he could also see that the nurse saw nothing of it and looked at him strangely. He must keep himself in hand. He knew he was a lost man if he did not keep himself in hand. But as the night waned the fever grew upon him, and the very dread he had of seeing the moth made him see it. About five, just as the dawn was gray, he tried to get out of bed and catch it, though his leg was afire with pain. The nurse had to struggle with him.

On account of this, they tied him down to the bed. At this the moth grew bolder, and once he felt it settle in his hair. Then, because he struck out violently with his arms, they tied these also. At this the moth came and crawled over his face, and Hapley wept, swore, screamed, prayed for them to take it off him, unavailingly.

The doctor was a blockhead, a just-qualified general practitioner, and quite ignorant of mental science. He simply said there was no moth. Had he possessed the wit, he might still, perhaps, have saved Hapley from his

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fate by entering into his delusion, and covering his face with gauze, as he prayed might be done. But, as I say, the doctor was a blockhead, and until the leg was healed Hapley was kept tied to his bed, and with the imaginary moth crawling over him. It never left him while he was awake and it grew to a monster in his dreams. While he was awake he longed for sleep, and from sleep he awoke screaming.

So now Hapley is spending the remainder of his days in a padded room, worried by a moth that no one else can see. The asylum doctor calls it hallucination; but Hapley, when he is in his easier mood, and can talk, says it is the ghost of Pawkins, and consequently a unique specimen and well worth the trouble of catching.

(1)

THE END









